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Vocalization: The Intermedial Adaptation of Old Testament Exile Narratives into Giuseppe Verdi's Opera Nabucco and Selected African-American Spirituals

by

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Abstract

Vocalization examines the intermedial adaptation of Old Testament exile narratives into Nabucco (1842), an opera by Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi and librettist Temistocle Solera, as well as selected African-American spirituals. To explore the relationship between the two aspects of a vocal utterance, the verbal and the musical, each text is approached from three perspectives identified by Brian Trowell: the composer; the audience; and the critic. Section One: The Composer, focuses on the aesthetic issues that arise from the intermedial adaptation of a canonical text into vocal music. Section Two: The Audience, situates both texts in a wider cultural context by exploring their subversive significance during the Risorgimento and the antebellum period. Section Three: The Critic, explores the contemporary role of opera and spirituals to reveal the way in which a comparative investigation such as this contributes to the transgression of disciplinary boundaries.

Acknowledgements

There are two aspects of any vocal utterance – the verbal and the musical. As a student of Comparative Literature and a singer, I've always tried to reconcile these two aspects in my life and in my studies. There are a few people I would like to thank for sharing their knowledge and love of both of these art forms with me.

My parents Scott and Mary Jefferies instilled an appreciation of the value of music and literature in me from a very early age. They drove me to countless singing lessons and, along with my brother Cameron, participated in many lively conversations about books around the breakfast table. I feel extremely fortunate to have grown up in an environment where the arts are so valued. I am also deeply indebted to my wonderful fiancé Pearce Shewchuk, who patiently witnessed and stood beside me for every step of this process. He must have known what he was getting himself into when I first read him Neruda! Thanks to all of you for the time you spent reading and for your love and support.

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I have learned a great deal about opera history and performance practices as a member of the Edmonton Opera Chorus. Over the past two years, I have had many interesting discussions about opera with Peter Dala, the Resident Conductor and Chorus Master at Edmonton Opera and the Music Director at Alberta Ballet. I consider Peter to be a musical mentor. I am also very grateful to Brian Deedrick, Edmonton Opera's Artistic Director, for all of his encouragement, and to Jeff McCune, Edmonton Opera's Artistic Administrator, for contributing his wonderful musical talents to my thesis defense.

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For R. Jefferies

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Introduction

Contrapuntal Perspectives on the Theme of Crossing Borders

There are two aspects to any vocal utterance – the verbal and the musical. As a student of both literature and music, I have observed that, traditionally, disciplinary barriers have separated these two aspects of "musico-literary" texts (Scher 242). In an attempt to transcend this barrier, my thesis compares the aesthetic and cultural implications of the intermedial adaptation of Old Testament exile narratives into two forms of vocal music. Chapter One examines Nabucco (1842), an opera by composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) and librettist Temistocle Solera (1815-1878), and Chapter Two explores selected African-American spirituals. Each of these adaptations occurred in the nineteenth century when a marginalized group crossed boundaries between media in an attempt to subvert dominant political power structures. To cultivate a "plurality of vision" that will allow me to distinguish the nuances of these adaptations, I will approach each adaptation from three perspectives that mirror a libretto's three addressees: the composer (poetic); the audience (historically-situated reception); and the critic (academic) (Trowell 1194). These three perspectives provide the structure for both chapters of my thesis, and thus the role of this introduction is to acquaint the reader with each perspective and the role it plays in my research.

Section One: The Composer

Section One of each chapter will explore the poetic issues of intertextuality and intermediality that result from the adaptation of a canonical text into a popular "musico-literary" text. Since the study of "musico-literary" texts has been neglected in traditional literary studies, this section will create a model for crossing disciplinary boundaries by

examining "intermedial transposition" – the adaptation of a literary "source" medium into a "musico-literary" "target" medium (Wolf 254).

The Old Testament, the "source" medium in my investigation, is a foundational canonical text in Western culture. It presents a worldview in which "God, [is] the creator of all things, [and is] all powerful and just" ("Masterpieces" 3). In the Old Testament, the history of God's "Chosen People" is controlled by an "omnipotent and omniscient deity" who liberates and rewards the faithful (Armstrong 55; "Bible" 48). This "religious legacy of the Hebrew people" became "codified for future generations" of Jews with "the creation of the canonical version of the Pentateuch or Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible" ("Masterpieces" 2). Coupled with the New Testament, it became an important canonical text for Christians as well. Over time, the Old Testament "stor[ies] of the actions and destiny of [...] the people of Israel" were adapted to ensure that they were relevant for "future generations" (Margolin 608). The Christian sermon is a notable example over many centuries of this adaptation process, in which "scenes and characters from the Bible" are "imaginatively reworked and humanized" to provide a Biblical perspective on contemporary events (Boitani 2). By interpreting "biblical heritage for the present listener," sermons mediate "between ancient history and contemporary reality [... ,] between the Christian truth claim and current views [, ... and] between the generality of Christian doctrine and the individuality of the listener"[1] (Beutel 45-50). As Salvatore Battaglia notes, sermons are "the Bible of everyday life, [and] of the common man" (qtd. in Boitani 2). My research examines two cases of a different nature that are also exemplary of the way in which Biblical narratives were used in "everyday life" in

[1] All translations from German to English from the Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik are courtesy of Dr. Uri Margolin.

the nineteenth century (Fiske 32). Both the Italians under Austrian rule and African-American slaves adapted Old Testament narratives into popular "musico-literary" texts and, by analogy, used the Hebrews' experiences of exile to comment on their contemporary situations.

Since "[a]daptation refers to the representation of a work in another medium," the adaptation of a "source" medium into a "target" medium introduces new voices and perspectives (Elliott 3). In musical terms, counterpoint is created when two or more melodic lines, or voices, are combined simultaneously "*punctus contra punctum*," or "point against point" (Machlis and Forney 21). The goal of counterpoint is to create a musical structure in which each part retains independence, yet also functions as a component of the whole. The comparative nature of my thesis creates a contrapuntal structure that allows me to achieve a new perspective on the "target" medium in my investigation – "musico-literary" texts.

"[M]usico-literary" texts, such as vocal music, are inherently contrapuntal in their combination of verbal and musical elements. While instrumental music often "lacks the precise semantics that make it possible to articulate definite stories," vocal music, with the notable exception of the vocalize,[2] combines elements of both "literary text and musical composition" (Ryan, "Media" 291). Examples of Western vocal music include: operas; lieder; oratorios; cantatas; masses; motets; madrigals; ballads; the English masque; and German singspiels (Scher 226-27). Settings and adaptations of Old Testament narratives, such as the ones I will be examining, exist in many of these forms in various historical and cultural contexts. Notable examples include operas such as

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[2] A vocalise is "a wordless melody" written for the voice (Machlis and Forney 583).

Salome (1905) by Richard Strauss (1864-1949) and Moses and Aron (1932) by Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), lieder such as Vier Ernste Gesänge (1896) by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), oratorios such as Samson (1743) by George Fredric Handel (1685-1759) and Elijah (1846) by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and some cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

Despite myriad opportunities for "musico-literary" examinations of these forms, the barrier between literary and musical scholarship that I previously identified has resulted in the categorization of vocal music as a "primarily musical genre" (Scher 227). In the following quotation from "Music and Literature," Steven Paul Scher examines the traditional role of vocal music in musicology and the importance of introducing a literary perspective. He states:

> No one would seriously think of, say, Verdi's operas based on Shakespeare plays or Schubert's Goethe lieder as first and foremost literary creations. Yet interpreters of such works cannot dispense with the literary aspect of the relation. After all, it is almost always a given text that inspires the composer's musical realization, even if it undergoes alteration in the creative process. For a long time, opera criticism and lied scholarship have been practiced almost exclusively by musicologists. As a result, the poetic elements in the word-tone synthesis have rarely received due attention. (227)

Scher's acknowledgement of the way in which "the literary aspect" of vocal music's "word-tone synthesis" has been neglected demonstrates the need for literary scholars to look beyond canonical categories and to cross disciplinary boundaries. Comparative

literature, with its emphasis on transcending linguistic, temporal, and national boundaries, provides a perfect model for this type of endeavor. By analyzing both a canonical operatic text and a selection of popular folk songs in a comparative context, I will present an interpretive strategy that could be used to break down disciplinary barriers and set the stage for the literary examination of the other genres of vocal music as well.

In Section One of each chapter, my interpretive strategy will focus on the poetic aspects of the intermedial adaptation process. "Intermediality," writes Werner Wolf, "applies in its broadest sense to a transgression of boundaries between media" (252). As I will demonstrate in Section Two: The Audience, the transgression of medial boundaries allows narrative constructs to take on new meanings when they are inserted into different social and historical contexts (Wolf 252). Since "[a]daptation can occur within or between any media," it is important to understand the relationships between different modes of representation so that adapted narratives can be properly evaluated (Elliott 3). In his essay on intermediality, Wolf states that elements of narrativity are present in "verbal narratives" such as literature, but also in "opera, film, ballet, the visual arts and [...] to some degree even instrumental music" (253). By understanding the narrative elements that operate in these media, appropriate interpretive tools can be applied to each aspect of the intermedial adaptation process and to "musico-literary" texts that combine multiple media such as opera and African-American spirituals.

"Intermediality" can take two different forms: "transmediality" and "intermedial transposition" (Wolf 252, 253, 254). "[T]ransmediality" describes "phenomena" that "cannot be isolated in a single media." The examination of these "phenomena" allows scholars to identify "palpable similarities between heteromedial semiotic entities" (Wolf

253). While an investigation of the "transmedial phenomena" in literary and musical texts would provide insight into the relationship between these two modes of expression, my research focuses on "intermedial transposition," which occurs in instances "where it is clear – or desirable to emphasize – that one medium acted as an origin of medial transfer" (Wolf 254, 253). I have chosen to focus on this form of "intermediality" in my research, because its structure explicitly reveals the transformations a narrative undergoes when it crosses the boundary between a "source" and "target" medium (Wolf 254). In many ways, "intermedial transposition" is analogous to the "translation" of a literary text; in each case, a critic must look at both the original and the adapted text to be able to identify the transformation that the narrative has undergone (Elliott 3). In Section One, my research examines the "most common variant" of "intermedial transposition" in contemporary culture – the transformation of one "semiotic complex[]" into another (Wolf 254). Examples of this transformation include the adaptation of novels into film and drama into opera. Although my investigation analyzes this variant in two specific social and historical contexts, the critical perspectives I employ can be applied to an exploration of any adaptation with a canonical literary text as the "source" medium and vocal music as the "target" medium (Wolf 254).

In opera, the "source" and "target" media are mediated by a literary text – the libretto. Therefore, to trace the process of "medial transfer" that occurred in the adaptation of Nabucco, in Chapter One: From the Banks of the Euphrates to the Streets of Milan, my research will focus on the libretto. In Reading Opera, a text devoted to the literary significance of the operatic libretto, Arthur Groos outlines the way in which a

libretto can operate as a point of entry for the literary inquiry into opera. This outline provides an important framework for my research. Gross contends:

> As adaptations of pre-existing literary works, libretti pose questions of intertextuality, transposition of genre, and reception history; as verbal artifacts, they invite the broad spectrum of contemporary reading strategies ranging from the formalistic to the feminist; and as texts for musical realization, they raise issues in the relation between the two media and their respective traditions. According to such perspectives, libretti are not "beneath contempt as literature," but very much within the purview of contemporary humanistic scholarship. (10)

The perspectives outlined by Groos will be used to evaluate the relationship between the literary, musical, and dramatic aspects of opera (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 5). To assess the way in which a libretto functions aesthetically as a literary template for "musical realization," I will begin by exploring the role of a libretto in the compositional process. I will then analyze the poetic implications of adapting "pre-existing literary [and musical] works" into Nabucco's libretto. Issues of intertextuality and "intermediality" will be examined in the Biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity, a French play entitled Nabuchodonosor (1836), by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeouis and Francis Cornu, an Italian ballet entitled Nabuccodonosor (1838), by Antonio Cortesi, and Giaccomo Rossini's (1742-1868) opera Mosé in Egitto (1818 and 1827). My investigation of the poetic aspects of the intermedial adaptation process will focus specifically on the importance of "power voices," *banda* brass, and the "unison chorus" "Va, Pensiero" ["Go, thought"]. This examination in Section One will provide the

foundation for Section Two in which I will explore Nabucco's social relevance during the Risorgimento (1815-1870).

African-American spirituals provide another opportunity to investigate the symbiotic relationship between words and music. Spirituals are songs that mix media by "blending melody or poetry or melody and narrative" (Godlovitch 12). Unlike opera, spirituals have traditionally received relatively little attention in the field of "musico-literary" inquiry because of their status as "folk songs" (Lovell xiii; Epstein, Sinful 100). In Black Talk, Ben Sidran contends, "Music in Western societies is thought of, in general terms, as either popular (low-brow, vulgar) or classical (exalted or art music). The popular music is then dismissed as inconsequential, while the art music is elevated above the realm of everyday activity" (xiii). Opera is exemplary of the Western classical tradition; like literature, opera has a distinct canon that creates and authorizes aesthetic standards. In contrast, spirituals are products of "everyday life," and thus contain musical elements and performance practices that are foreign to Western classical music. Just as I am challenging traditional literary barriers by comparing a canonical literary text to a "musico-literary" text, I will also challenge traditional musical barriers by comparing Nabucco, a canonical opera, to a selection of folksongs. Like Groos in Reading Opera, John Lovell Junior outlines the relationship of spirituals to the Western literary tradition in Black Song: The Forge and the Flame. Lovell's outline will be foundational for my discussion of the poetic aspect of spirituals in Chapter Two: Crossing the River Jordan on the Underground Railroad. He states:

> As literature, the spirituals lack many of the qualities which academics require. They were not written down, book fashion. They were not in

> fashionable or, even, grammatically correct English. [...] Many times their language is not literary at all. Like most folk songs, theirs is the language of the people. The hope of their creators was communication, not inclusion in an anthology. [...] Even so, they possess a number of authentic literary qualities. They have poetic exaltation and often a care for language in the best poetic senses. They have definite themes and theme development. Borrowing from the Bible and other sources, they show a creditable, and sometimes a remarkable, adaptive style and result. (375)

With the development of postcolonial and minority studies, scholars have recognized that the marginalized status of spirituals reflects the enslaved status of their original composers and performers. To transcend this power structure, I will employ an "approach [...] to music making" presented by Christopher Small in Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration of Afro-American Music, which situates spirituals "within the purview of contemporary humanistic scholarship" (12-13). In Section One, I will use the borrowing process Lovell outlines to allow me to examine the relationship between the oral tradition, in which spirituals were composed and performed, and the Western literary and musical traditions, in which they have been preserved and interpreted (Lovell 9). My discussion will thus begin with the application of a definition of folk songs adopted by the International Folk Music Council to selected spirituals, followed by a discussion of the devices that facilitate oral transmission. I will then explore the transcription process in which orally transmitted texts were transposed into a printed form. To illustrate this point, I will compare two representative versions of the famous spiritual "Go down,

Moses," one from J.B.T. Marsh's The Story of the Jubilee Singers (1881) and one from the second volume of Henry Thacker Burleigh's The Celebrated Negro Spirituals (1919). This examination of the poetic aspects of the adaptation process will provide a foundation for Section Two: The Audience, in which I will evaluate the social relevance of the adaptation of the story of Moses, a Biblical exile narrative, in the antebellum period (1800 – 1860).

Section Two: The Audience

Vocalization is "an act, process, or instance of vocalizing" in which a performer "gives voice to" a printed text ("Vocalization" 1301). While Section One examines the creation of "musico-literary" texts, Section Two explores the way in which the act of performance mediates between the text and the audience. Therefore, in the second section, my focus shifts away from creative power structures that govern the textual and aesthetic creation of "musico-literary" texts to the societal power structures that influence their reception. In this section, in order to demonstrate "how a work adapts to a new social context or audience," I will situate the adaptation process in a wider "historical" context by analyzing the social, cultural, and political function of Nabucco and African-American spirituals (Elliott 4; Clement 19). I will focus on the way in which these songs allowed an exiled group to express collective sentiments of hope and protest while subverting dominant political power structures. To support my argument, I will turn to Edward Said, who discusses the historical and ideological implications of culture, texts, and critical analysis throughout his critical writing. In The World, the Text, and the Critic, Said contends that "literature and the humanities generally exist within culture," and that, as the three sections of each chapter demonstrate, the author, text, reader, and

critic exist within a complex cultural network (2, 24). This approach supports Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon's assertion that:

> As an activity, a cultural practice, music is now being seen as available to cultural (as well as strictly formal musical) analysis because of its dynamic relationship with what Lawrence Kramer calls a "network of social, intellectual, and material conditions that strongly, though often implicitly, affect meaning." (Opera 5)

In his article "The Empire at Work: Verdi's Aida," Said models this "network" by cultivating a "full contrapuntal appreciation" of Aida (1871) to reveal the way in which dominant groups can use "musico-literary" text to enforce and reproduce political structures of power and authority (Culture 125). By cultivating a "contrapuntal appreciation" of Nabucco and selected African-American spirituals, I intend to demonstrate that the "realities of power and authority – as well as the *resistance* [italics mine] offered by men, women, and social movements to institutions, authorities, and orthodoxies – are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics" (Said, World 5). Prior to Italian Unification (1870) and the American Civil War (1861-65), the adaptation of Old Testament exile narratives into vocal music allowed two oppressed groups to resist dominant power structures with a political voice.

In his essay "Reflections on Exile," Said describes exile as an "unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home" (173). He explores the implications of the perspective this rift provides in the statement:

> Seeing the world as a foreign land makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*. (186; italics mine)

For Biblical Jews, this contrapuntal awareness was fundamental to the way in which they forged their relationship with God and with their homeland of Israel. In turn, Italians cultivated the awareness Said describes as a way of fueling nationalistic sentiment under Austrian occupation and African-Americans used it as a means of coping with slavery's oppressive mechanisms of displacement and captivity. Therefore, in each of the case studies I will be examining, an oppressed group adapted, and analogously interpreted, an ancient religious narrative. The Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik defines an analogy as a "way of finding/discovering and expressing connections between different areas of reality," often through a four-term relation a:b = c:d (Hoenen 498-501). In the chapters that follow, I will compare the way in which the Pharaoh:Israelites = Austrians:Italians, just as Harriet Tubman:escaped slaves = Moses:Israelites.

Section Two of Chapter One presents the libretto as a "verbal artifact." By situating the libretto in a historical context, my research examines the way in which the story of the Babylonian captivity under Nebuchadnezzar resonated with Italian audiences during the Risorgimento, a period of surging Italian nationalism. Dealing with issues of slavery, captivity, and conversion, this narrative was used as an analogy for the plight of the Italian people who were exiled on their own soil by the Hapsburg monarchy. Said contends that nationalism has an

> essential association with exile. Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs; and, by doing so, it fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages. [...] All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement. The struggles to win American independence, to unify Germany or Italy, to liberate Algeria were those of national groups separated – exiled – from what was construed to be their rightful way of life. ("Reflections" 176)

In this section, I will examine the way in which Italy, with its regional and linguistic disparity prior to Unification, used opera, a traditional Italian musical form, to cultivate a sense of national belonging. I will begin by evaluating the social role of opera and operatic censorship in nineteenth-century Italian society, followed by a discussion of the Risorgimento. I will then explore Nabucco's significance as the "quintessential Risorgimento opera" (Kimbell 449). To evaluate the subversive role of Nabucco, I will discuss the "historiographic fantasies" that resulted from the opera's "retrospective mythologization" as a result of Verdi's political legacy (Smart, "Liberty" 103; Smart, "Verdi" 37).

While Verdi's opera cultivated nationalistic sentiments, African-American spirituals explored a different aspect of exile – displacement. In Section Two of Chapter Two, I will demonstrate the way in which this theme demonstrates that "exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being" since "[e]xiles are cut off from their roots, their land, [and] their past" (Said, "Reflections" 177). Africans were forced into exile when they were taken from their homelands and transported to America

as slaves; their filiative bonds were severed, catalyzing the formation of new affiliative connections (Said, World 16). Spirituals are affiliative in nature. By combining African musical elements with a Western religious text, they support Said's assertion that, for an exile, "both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally" ("Reflections" 186). I will begin with an examination of the role of oppression and religion in nineteenth-century slave communities. To demonstrate the way in which spirituals were used as a form of resistance, I will then explore the correlation between the Biblical Moses and the Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman (ca. 1820-1913). Tubman was called Moses during her lifetime because she went down into "the Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of people into liberty" (Eggleston 122; Humez 71-73). By exploring this example of the way in which African-American slaves drew a correlation between a Biblical and contemporary hero, and used the Biblical story of the Exodus as an analogy for their own situation, I will demonstrate that slaves used the Biblical narratives in spirituals such as "Go down, Moses" as a code to express their yearning for freedom. As in Chapter One, this section ends with an examination of the "retrospective mythologization" of "Go down, Moses" as a result of Tubman's legacy.

In Section Two, my discussion of Nabucco and selected African-American spirituals will demonstrate that an exile's contrapuntal perspective can be used to undermine cultural power structures. As Said states, "The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, [and] break barriers of thought and

experience" ("Reflections" 185). In the context of my thesis, such barriers can also take the form of divisions between academic disciplines. Section Three: The Critic explores, accordingly, the way in which a comparativist can transcend these barriers.

Section Three: The Critic

As I have discussed in each of the previous sections, a contrapuntal perspective, which will enable critics to "see (or hear) beyond the words on the printed page[,]" can only be cultivated if both aspects of a "musico-literary" text are taken into account (Trowell 1193). In Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society, Said identifies a contemporary trend that is detrimental to cultivating this polyphonic perspective; intellectuals are often educated in literature, the cinema, painting, sculpture, and theatre, but not music (130). While, classical music was a cornerstone of Western nineteenth-century culture, as Sections One and Two demonstrate, its aesthetic vocabulary is unapproachable for modern, untrained audiences (Barenboim and Said 130). A humanistic scholar "will misunderstand the function and effect of the libretto [or any form of "musico-literary" text] unless he or she is also endowed with sufficient musicality to respond to the mysterious new compound that results from the fusion of words with music" (Trowell 1193). In contemporary institutions, scholars with interdisciplinary knowledge have begun to examine both the verbal and the musical aspects of this "fusion" and thus the study of "musico-literary" texts has become "a vigorous and steadily growing field of [contemporary] comparative inquiry" (Scher 242). I will use Section Three: The Critic as an opportunity to self-reflexively explore how my research contributes to this burgeoning "field."

Conclusion

As a singer and a student of comparative literature, I straddle literature and music – my perspective is contrapuntal. In the chapters that follow, by comparing two seemingly different "musico-literary" adaptations of a canonical literary text, I intend to use this perspective to cross borders between cultures and time periods, blur national, racial, and linguistic boundaries, and challenge the traditional categories of "thought and experience" that govern the interpretation of "musico-literary" texts.

Chapter One

Opera: From the Banks of the Euphrates to the Streets of Milan

Overture

Like the art form it describes, the word opera is Italian in origin. Opera's roots can be traced artistically to the courts of sixteenth-century Italy and linguistically to the plural of the Latin word *opus*, meaning "work" (Sadie, History 1). As a result of the transformations this art form has undergone in the past four centuries, opera has become a "generic term" in contemporary usage that references "staged sung drama" in a variety of historical and cultural contexts (Sadie, History 1; Brown and Williams 675). Since this thesis is concerned with literary origins and transformations, my research will focus on the aesthetic and cultural consequences of the intermedial adaptation of a canonical literary text into opera in a formative historical period in the genre's country of origin. As indicated in the Introduction, to establish a "plurality of vision" that will allow me to explore Arthur Groos' perspectives on the libretto, I have divided this chapter into three sections that mirror a libretto's three addressees: the composer (poetic); the audience (historically-situated reception); and the critic (academic) (Said, "Reflections" 186; Trowell 1194).

The focus of Section One: The Composer, is on the poetic aspects of the libretto. To demonstrate the way in which a libretto functions as a literary template for "musical realization," I will begin with a discussion of the "musico-literary" elements of a libretto, followed by an exploration of the collaboration between Giuseppe Verdi and Temistocle Solera (Groos 10; Scher 242). Integral to this discussion will be an analysis of the way in which the adaptation of "pre-existing [...] works" influenced Nabucco's form and

content. My examination of the "relation between [...] media [literature and music] and their respective traditions" will set the stage for my examination of the cultural implications of operatic vocalization in Section Two (Groos 10).

Section Two: The Audience will focus on the libretto as a verbal artifact. Groos asserts that viewing a libretto from this perspective invites a "broad spectrum of contemporary reading strategies" (10). In this section, I will employ a cultural reading strategy to assess the way in which an operatic performance is a socially situated event (Bell 420). I will begin this section with an exploration of the role of opera and operatic censorship in nineteenth-century Italian society, followed by an examination of the impact of the Risorgimento on Italian culture. To demonstrate the way in which the opera's Biblical content was interpreted politically, I will explore Nabucco's significance as the "quintessential Risorgimento opera" (Kimbell 449). Finally, my discussion of the "historiographic fantasies" that shaped Nabucco's role in Italy's national mythology will provide the foundation for Section Three (Smart, "Liberty" 103).

In Section Three: The Critic, I will examine the way in which opera's role in contemporary society enables me to situate Nabucco "within the purview of contemporary humanistic scholarship." As my interpretive strategy in this chapter demonstrates, a critic is able to "see (or hear) beyond the words on the printed page" by revealing the "web of affiliations" that influence the composition, reception, and interpretation of a "musico-literary" text (Trowell 1193; Said, Culture 125). Such a self-reflexive examination of my interpretive strategy will enable me to situate my research within the comparative framework of this thesis.

Section One: The Composer

As the Italian meaning of the word libretto ("little book") suggests, opera has been closely affiliated with literature throughout history (Groos 2). Opera's literary roots can be traced to "literary discussion in [Renaissance Italian] high society," which occurred primarily in an "informal academy known as the [Florentine] Camerata" and in the "circle around Jacopo Corsi" (Brown and Williams 674, 672). These discussions were fuelled by interest in the role of music in ancient Greek tragedy and supported by the "variety of associations between music and spectacle that run through Italian culture from the late 15th century," including intermedios, which flourished in the Florentine Medici court, and pastoral plays (Sadie, History 3, 17, 15, 16). The birth of opera is traditionally traced to Claudio Monteverdi's Orfeo, which was performed in Mantua in 1607 (Sadie, History 17). Monteverdi's statement, "The text [...] should be the master of the music, not the servant" (qtd. in Machlis and Forney 366) is indicative of the relationship between words and music in opera's early stages. Literary dominance remained the status quo for the "first two centuries of the genre's existence," since both librettists and operatic commentators were trained as "literary men" (Trowell 1193; Della Seta 69). However, by the nineteenth century, Monteverdi's vision had been "inverted" (Della Seta 69). Composers began to assume "the role of 'musical dramatists;'" as well as being responsible for the musical score, they also "intervened in writing the libretto." As a result of this shift toward the supremacy of music over text, "librettos lost importance as a literary genre." In literary examinations of librettos during this period, they were "compared unfavorably to their literary sources [...] and criticized for unrealistic plots

and purportedly bombastic, antiquated language" that served the music but not the narrative (Della Seta 69).

As I noted in the Introduction, the boundaries between music and literature have again been eroded in contemporary academia as "literary critics [, ...] musicologists and those in theatre studies have [... begun to recognize] the non-literary values of the libretto and have re-appraised its function in musical dramaturgy." Nabucco's libretto is an important object of re-appraisal, not only because it is a canonical nineteenth-century opera, but also because the influence of "musical dramatists" on a libretto "culminated [...] in Italy with Verdi" (Della Seta 69). Verdi's influence on the "dramatic shape of his works" was so profound that in The Tenth Muse: A Historical Study of the Opera Libretto, Patrick Smith contends that "Verdi must be treated as a librettist in any study of the form" (237). In the remainder of this section, I will explore the collaboration between Verdi and Solera that occurred during the creation of Nabucco.

Giuseppe Verdi, the son of an inn-keeper and a spinner, was born in Roncole, "a small village near Busseto in the Duchy of Parma" in 1813. After preliminary musical studies in Roncole, Verdi moved to Busseto in 1823 to pursue a formal education (Parker, "Verdi" 933). Verdi left Busseto for Milan in 1839 with the promise that his first opera, Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio (Oberto, Count of San Bonifacio), would be performed at La Scala, one of Italy's most important opera houses (Phillips-Matz 5; Parker, "Verdi" 933; Sadie, Verdi 37; Parker, "Verdi" 934). Following the successful premiere of Oberto on November 17, 1839, Verdi entered into a contract for three subsequent operas with La Scala's impresario Bartolomeo Merelli (Parker, Introduction xi; Petrobelli 9). After the death of his wife and two children, and the disastrous reception of his second opera Un

giorno di regno (King for a Day) (1840), Verdi attempted to break this agreement and end his career as a composer (Parker, Introduction xi; Petrobelli 9; Sadie, Verdi 39; Parker, "Verdi" 934). In an attempt to dissuade Verdi, Merelli presented him with Temistocle Solera's libretto for Nabucco (Parker, Introduction xii; Parker, "Nabucco" 544).

Italian librettist Temistocle Solera was born in Ferrera in 1815. During his childhood, "[w]hile his father languished in the dreaded Spielberg prison," Solera had an illustrious upbringing; he "was educated in Vienna, ran away to join a circus, [and] completed his studies in Milan and Pavia" (Black 444). Solera's first foray into opera was the creation of a libretto for Verdi's Oberto (Black 444; Groos 10). The collaboration between these artists was re-kindled with Nabucco and continued for three subsequent "Risorgimento opera[s]:" I Lombardi alla prima crociata (The Lombards on the First Crusade) (1843), Giovanna d'Arco (Joan of Arc) (1845), and Atilla (1846) (Black 444; Sadie, Verdi 48; 68). To evaluate the nature of this partnership and Verdi's influence on the form and content of Nabucco's libretto, I will now carefully scrutinize the opera's compositional process.

Verdi traditionally composed an opera in seven stages, which are outlined by Luke Jensen in his "Introduction to Verdi's Working Methods." In the first stage, a subject, cast, and contract were solidified, followed by the creation of a libretto in the second stage. In the third stage, the composer created "sketches and continuity drafts," followed by the composition of a "skeleton score" and the commencement of music rehearsals in stage four. Stage five involved the integration of visual aspects into the drama, including staging and set and costume designs. In the sixth stage, the libretto and score were published, followed by the composer's revisions in stage seven (Jensen 260).

Since this chapter is concerned with role of the libretto as a text for "musical realization," I have focussed my research on stages one through four of the compositional process in which the relationship between words and music is most prominent.

The beginning of the first stage of composition was marked by the selection of the opera's subject matter by "either Verdi or his librettist" (Parker, "Verdi" 934). Since Merelli did not present Verdi with Nabucco's libretto until after it had been completed, Solera was responsible for the choice of subject and adaptation of relevant "source" material (Wolf 254). The subject of most opera librettos is culled from "pre-existing models" and Nabucco is no exception (Della Seta 69). This tradition of artistic borrowing can be traced to Orfeo; that opera was a setting of a poem by Alessandro Striggio, which was itself an adaptation of the Greek myth of Orfeo and Euridice (Sadie, History 17). It was advantageous for a librettist to borrow from these models because a libretto's structure does not allow for detailed narrative development. If a librettist chose a subject that was familiar to a contemporary audience, they carried "with them to the theatre a whole train of associations deriving from the original author's treatment of a subject" (Trowell 1198). Although these associations can help the audience understand the plot, they can also be detrimental to the interpretation of the adapted text. As Herbert Lindenberger insightfully notes, when "a canonized literary work" such as the Bible is adapted into an opera, its "admirers note and often deplore what has been 'lost' from the original in the course of transformation" without recognizing that "opera characteristically seeks its own forms" ("Towards" 9). Opera is a "plurimedial" art form that incorporates "vocal [...] and instrumental music," "ballet [...] poetry [, ...] drama, acting [, ... and] scenery and costumes" (Wolf 254; Machlis and Forney 140). Each of

these media uses different "meaning components" to construct a narrative (Hirsch 222). To guard against a misreading of Nabucco's libretto, I will proceed with a discussion of the "meaning components" that influenced its form and content as a result of the adaptation process.

Solera chose a familiar subject for the libretto – the Old Testament exile narrative of the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites under Nebuchadnezzar (See Appendix A). Descriptions of different aspects of the Babylonian captivity occur throughout the Old Testament. The Book of Jeremiah "hinges on the Israelites' captivity in Babylon," as do "chapters 24 and 25 of 2 Kings, chapter 36 of 2 Chronicles, the Book of Psalms," while the "Book of Daniel (ch. 1-6)," provides a "more intimate tradition about the person and character" of Nebuchadnezzar (Petrobelli 12-13; Wiseman 1). Set in Jerusalem and Babylon in 587 B.C.E., the year that "Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians," Nabucco incorporates narrative elements from each of these Biblical accounts (Budden 90; Anderson 7). They include: "the invasion of Judah by the king of Babylon"; the captivity of the Israelites"; the destruction of the temple and ensuing slavery; Nebucadnezzar's fall into madness; and the restoration of his sanity following his religious conversion (Petrobelli 13; Budden 90).

The opera is divided into four parts, each of which Solera gave a title with a religious theme: "Gerusalemme" (Jerusalem); "L'empio" (The impious one); "La profezia" (The prophecy); and "L'idolo infranto" (The broken idol). In the libretto and score, each of these titles is accompanied by a subtitle that is either a direct or paraphrased quotation from the Book of Jeremiah (Petrobelli 12). Since an audience

would only have access to the subtitles in a printed form, the act of watching and listening to the performance on stage was thus supplemented by reading.

The subtitles provide a Biblical framework for Solera's adaptation by referring directly to the events from the Old Testament that I listed above. They also foreshadow the most important event of Nabucco's four acts. The subtitle for Act I (Gerusalemme) (Jerusalem) reads, "(Cosi hai detto il Signore: ecco, io dò questa città in mano del re di Babilonia, egli l'arderà col fuoco. *Gerem*. XXXIV)" ["(So said the Lord: here I give this city in hand of the King of Babylon, he burns with fire. Jerem. 34. 2-3)"][3] (Verdi 36). This subtitle is referenced in this act when Jerusalem is placed in the "mano del re di Babilonia" ["hand of the King of Babylon"]; Nabucco orders the destruction of the temple and takes the Hebrew people captive. The subtitle for Act II (L'empio) (The impious one) reads, "(Ecco! … il turbo del Signore è uscito fuori; cadrà sul cap dell'empio. *Gerem*. XXX)" ["(Here! … the turbulence of the Lord comes; it will fall on the head of the impious one. Jerem. 30)"] (Verdi 213). Accordingly, in Act II, scene ii, Nabucco declares himself God and a lightening bolt strikes him, illustrating the claim that the impious will be punished (Verdi 305-06). The subtitle for Act III (La profezia) (The prophecy) reads, "(Le fiere dei deserti avranno in Babilonia la loro stanza insieme coi gufi, e l'ulule vi dimoreranno. *Gerem*. L)" ["(The beasts of the desert will have in Babylon their room together the owls: and the hoopees will reside. Jerem. 50. 39)"] (Verdi 320). In the prophecy in Act III, scene ii, to which the act's title refers, Zaccaria elaborates on this Biblical reference. He states, "A posare sui cranni, sull'ossa qui verrano le jene, i serpenti, fra la polve dall'aure commossa un silenzio fatal regnerà! Solo

[3] All of the translations from Italian to English that are in square brackets are mine. Translations in round brackets are quotations and are accompanied by citations.

il gufo suoi tristi lamenti spiegherà quando viene la sera … Niuna pietra ove sorse l'altera Babilonia allo stranio dirà!" ["To rest on the skulls, on the bones, here will come the hyenas, the snakes, among the dust from the wind a fatal silence will reign. Only the owl's sad laments will unfurl when evening falls … Not one stone will tell the foreigner where haughty Babylon once rose."] (Verdi 406-10). The subtitle for Act IV (L'idolo infranto) (The broken idol) reads, "(Bel è confuso; i suoi idoli sono rotti in pezzi. *Gerem.* L)" ["(Bal is confused; his idols are broken in pieces. Jerem. 50. 2-3)"] (Verdi 418). This subtitle refers to the destruction of an idol of Bal in Act IV, scene ii, which causes Nabucco to release the Hebrew slaves and embrace their God. He states, "Ah, torna Israello, torna alle gioie, alle goie del patrio del suol! Sorga al tuo Nome tempio novello … Ei solo è grande, è forte, è forte Ei sol!" ["Ah, return Israel to joy, return to joy in your native land! Raise a new temple to your God … he alone is grand, he alone is strong!"] (Verdi 460-61). These four subtitles, which trace the Babylonian captivity from the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem to eventual triumph and freedom, provided audiences with an outline of the Biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar.

Since the Bible was familiar to Verdi's predominantly Catholic audiences, Solera was able to take considerable liberties with the original plot so that the "meaning components" of each media that he adapted could be suitably incorporated (Donakowski 243). The adaptation of a "source" text into an operatic libretto involves a great deal of "narrative concision and compression" necessitated by the fact that "it takes […] much longer to sing than to say (or read) a line of text" (Trowell 1198; Hutcheon and Hutcheon, "Opera" 408). To trim the narrative to a suitable length, librettists often sacrifice plot details and "historical explanations," reduce the number of characters, omit

or reorder scenes, and reword "important verbal exchanges from the original text," thereby obscuring the form and content of the original work (Trowell 1198; Della Seta 69). To explore the alterations Solera made to the Biblical narrative, I will examine the way in which he built his libretto by incorporating adapted and invented elements onto Nabucco's "[B]iblical base" (Petrobelli 13).

Apart from the Bible, Nabucco's "principal source" is Nabuchodonosor (1836), a four-act French play by Auguste Anicet-Bourgeois and Francis Cornu (Petrobelli 13; Budden 94). Unlike the Bible, which is intended to be received by readers, Nabuchodonosor is a performance text, and thus the dramatic elements of Anicet-Bourgeois and Cornu's adaptation are integral to Nabucco's form and content. The structure of Nabucco's libretto follows this "source" so closely that when Nabucco was performed in Paris, where Nabuchodonosor had premiered, Verdi was "accused of plagarism" and Giulio Ricordi was fined 1000 francs (Budden 94). In a dramatic work such as a play or opera, plot details and character development are no longer expressed through prose or verse narration. Instead, they must be communicated through "aural and [...] visual" "meaning components" such as dialogue, "gesture[]," and "scenery" (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 1; Clement 19). Into this structure, Anicet-Bourgeois and Cornu introduced new characters and dramatic situations. For example, apart from Nebuchadnezzar and the Israelites, none of the characters in Nabuchodonosor appear in the Bible (Petrobelli 13). The addition of the love story between Ismaele and Fenena, and Abigaille's jealousy and attempts to seize power made this familiar Biblical narrative into an engaging piece of drama to which the audience could relate emotionally. Since Nabuchodonosor was "well known in Italy in translation," it is quite possible that Verdi's

opera audiences, if they also attended dramatic performances, brought their knowledge of this adaptation of the Biblical narrative with them to the opera house (Budden 94). If this were the case, they would also have recognized the narrative elements that Solera eliminated during the process of compression. For example, unlike Solera's Abigaille, who begins as a scorned and vengeful lover, in the play, she "begins as a dare-devil heroine who rescues her sister Fenena from Israelite captivity by disguising herself as Josabeth of Marpha, a vengeful Hebrew war-widow [...]. It is only when Nebuchadnezzar appoints Fenena as regent during his absence in the field that the elder princess turns sour" (Budden 94). Also, after Fenena is executed, she "is brought back to life by a divine miracle [and] Abigail is stabbed to death by her adoptive father" (Budden 95). These layers of psychological complexity would be have been difficult to portray in opera where the characters' roles were traditionally pre-determined by the voice type with which they were associated. Antonio Cortesi's adaptation of Nabuchodonosor into a ballet, which relies upon visual "meaning components" to communicate narrative elements, demonstrates how the plot and character development differ between media.[4]

The second "source" for Solera's libretto was Antonio Cortesi's ballet Nabucodonosor, which premiered at La Scala in 1838 (Kimbell 448). "As the preface to the scenario-book makes clear," writes David Kimbell, Cortesi's ballet was "based on a highly successful French play" (448). While it is possible that Verdi's audiences would have been familiar with Nabuchodonosor, it is also possible that they would have knowledge of the ballet if they regularly attended performances at La Scala; even the

[4] The "printed scenario" of Cortesi's Nabucodonosor, "published by Truffi can be found in the Biblioteca Braidense in Milan" (Budden 95). As I was unable to gain access to the original, I have used Julian Budden's analysis of this scenario in The Operas of Verdi Vol. 1, as well as a selected transciption of it found in David Kimbell's Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism.

"scenery and costumes" from Cortesi's production were used in the first staging of Nabucco (Kimbell 448). In a ballet, "the language of choreography is strictly limited" when compared to the information that can be imparted verbally in spoken drama, since non-verbal gesture cannot communicate the same the level of detail as verbal language (Budden 95). To remedy this situation, a ballet's narrative can be contained in a scenario-book, which is similar to a libretto. Like nineteenth-century opera, which was written to showcase the voices of the singers for whom the roles were created, it was the talent of a "virtuoso star" that was of the greatest importance in the creation of a ballet during this period (Budden 95). Therefore, Nabuchodonosor's complex plot had to be simplified by Cortesi to showcase the leading dancers. Very much like a librettist, Cortesi cut "subsidiary characters" and secondary plot lines in his scenario. For example, the character "Manasseh, the fanatical Jewish patriot who ends by aligning himself with Abigail" in the play was eliminated, as was the scene with Josabeth. Further, Fenena is left "in Jewish hands until the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar" and "is released by Ishmael only after Zacharias has offered to stab her [, ... and] Abigail [...] remains a villainess from the start" of the ballet (Budden 95).

Solera incorporated Cortesi's alterations into Nabucco's libretto as well as introducing original elements that reflect opera's "meaning components." As Kimbell notes, "A strict operatic version of Cortesi's scenario would have required two prima donnas for the carefully balanced roles of Abigaille and Fenena" (449). Since it was customary for an opera to showcase only one prima donna, Fenena, the second soprano, was given a minor role; "neither her love affair with the young Israelite Ismaele nor her politico-religious confrontations with the Ballite faction in Babylon has such a central

place in the opera as in the ballet" (Kimbell 449-50). To bolster Abigaille's role as the prima donna and enhance her political motivations, Solera altered Cortesi's plot so she would not accompany Nebuchadnezzar into battle, remaining instead in Babylon to discover "the 'fatal scritto' proving her to be illegitimate" (Budden 95). Since it was also customary for nineteenth-century operatic plot to focus on a "love story" in which the first and second sopranos vie for the love of the tenor, Solera introduced the theme of "Abigail[le]'s unrequited love [for] Ishmael" (Celletti 217; Budden 95). Now that I have outlined the way in which the content of Nabucco was adapted from "pre-existing literary works," I will examine the form of the libretto.

Opera is an art form that showcases the human voice. In a libretto, a poetic phrase is a template for a musical phrase; words thus operate as vehicles for the voice. In a libretto, words are structured in a fixed form so that they can provide an adequate vehicle for the voice. The "first stage in fashioning an opera from a source text" involves the division of a narrative into vocal "numbers such as arias, duets and ensembles" (Parker, "Verdi" 934). Arias, derived from the Italian word for "air," are operatic showpieces for the principal singers. In the context of the plot, arias are used to release and reflect upon the "emotional tension accumulated in the course of the action" (Machlis and Forney 141). To propel the action, plot information is provided between arias by recitative, a form of "musical declamation" that approximates speech (Machlis and Forney 140). Operas also contain ensemble numbers, such as duets, trios, quartets, and quintets, in which characters interact conversationally (Machlis and Forney 141). After creating this "formal outline," a librettist adapts the narrative into "a poetic text in which the configuration of verse forms [...] reflect[s] in detail the various musical forms agreed

upon" (Parker, "Verdi" 934) As Fabrizio Della Seta notes, "The choice of poetic meters [...] shapes musical phrases and entire melodies. Since a musical phrase generally sets one or two lines of poetry, length of line affects breadth of melody" (71). Therefore, to read the libretto as poetry "gives no more than a schematic indication of the way in which the librettist expects the music to be articulated [...]. It shows nothing of the musical time-scale or what music can do in the way of contrast or transition" (Trowell 1194). A libretto cannot be read like a book or even a dramatic script, because the words do not carry meaning unless they are accompanied by the music for which they are intended.

It was in the third stage of the compositional process that music was added to the text. At this point, Merelli presented Verdi with Solera's completed libretto for Nabucco. It is interesting to note that the original libretto for Nabucco, "entitled Il Nabucodonosor," was intended for the Prussian composer Otto Nicolai. After he "abandoned" the project, it was given to Verdi (Parker, Introduction xi, xii). True to his reputation as one of opera's important "musical dramatists," Verdi demanded alterations to the plot to suit his musical vision for the opera. The most significant change that Verdi made to Solera's completed libretto was the elimination of the customary love duet between Fenena and Ismaele in favor of a religious "'prophecy' for Zacharias" (Budden 95). In his Autobiographical Sketch, which is purported to have been dictated by Verdi to Ricordi on 19 October 1879, the composer described the encounter he had with Solera in which these alterations took place (Parker, Introduction xi). Verdi states:

> I remember a comical scene I had with Solera a short time before [the final announcement of Nabucco]. In the third act he had made a love duet between Fenena and Ismaele. I didn't like it because it cooled down the

> action and seemed to me to diminish somewhat the biblical grandeur that characterized the drama. One morning when Solera was at my house I mentioned this to him, but he wouldn't consider my remark, not so much because he didn't find it correct, but because it irritated him to redo what had once been done. We argued, both of us presenting our reasons; I held fast and so did he. He asked me what I wanted in place of the duet, and I suggested that he make a prophecy for the Prophet Zaccaria; he did not find the idea bad, and, with ifs and buts, said he would think it over and write it later. That was not what I wanted, because I knew that many, many days would go by before Solera would make up his mind to write a line. I locked the door, put the key in my pocket and, half-serious, half-joking, said to Solera: "You are not leaving here until you have written the prophecy: here's the Bible, you have the words ready made." [...] a quarter of an hour later the prophecy was written! (Qtd. in Parker, Introduction xv)

Verdi's direct allusion to the adaptation process in this passage is very significant. By downplaying the love story themes in the Nabucco, which was the traditional focal point of an operatic story, Verdi emphasized the libretto's religious subject matter. As I will demonstrate in Section Two, this religious content enhanced the political significance of the narrative and enabled it to resonate in nineteenth-century Italian society (Petrobelli 13; Budden 95). The poetic foundation for a political interpretation of Nabucco's subject matter can be built upon Pierluigi Petrobelli's contention that it was around "two poles – a people dramatically fearful for their salvation and an unusual female figure [Abigaille]

who suppresses her femininity because of a thirst for power and revenge – [that] Verdi constructed his score" (12). To evaluate the importance of these two themes, I will now explore examples of musical intertextuality in Verdi's composition of Nabucco, followed by an examination of the innovative elements in the opera that supported the relationship between music and politics: "power voices"; *banda* brass; and the unison chorus (Robinson 168).

While my previous discussion has focussed on the way in which the adaptation of "pre-existing [...] works" shaped Nabucco's libretto, it is important to note that the opera's score was also the product of an adaptation process. Prior to Nabucco, only one Biblical opera had acquired "status of a repertory work" in nineteenth-century Italy – Giaccomo Rossini's Mosé in Egitto [Moses in Egypt] (Kimbell 447). There are two versions of Mosé in Egitto, the first of which was composed to a three-act libretto by Andrea Leone Tottola for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples (1818), while the second was translated into French and modified by Balocchi and De Jouy (1827) (Petrobelli 14). Petrobelli asserts that, given "the young Verdi's biography it seems inevitable that the composer knew the second rather than the first version of Mosé. And he knew it not simply through reading and studying the score but by attending performances"; the revised Mosé was first performed at Milan's Teatro della Canobbiana in 1835 and was remounted at La Scala later that same year and in 1840, "hardly a year before the composition of Nabucco" (14).

To illustrate the way in which Mosé provided Verdi with "a structural model" for Nabucco, I will examine the parallels between characters and their vocal roles in each opera (Budden 96). Mosé and Nabucco open in the same manner – enslaved Israelites are

"comforted" by the "prophet[s]" Mosé and Zaccaria, both of whom are basses (Petrobelli 15; 14). The role of the "tyrannical enemy of the Hebrew people," Faraone and Nabucco, is written for a baritone in each opera (Petrobelli 14). The lovers also mirror each other: the tenor Amenofi, son of Faraone, is in love with the soprano Anaide, Mosé's niece, "just as in Nabucco the Israelite tenor Ismaele loves the Babylonian soprano Fenena" (Petrobelli 14). The relationship of voices to characters in the two operas involves even minor roles: "Osiride, high priest of Iside in Mosé, is a bass, as is the high priest of Baal in Nabucco; and the captain of the guards in Nabucco, the compramario tenor Abdallo, finds a parallel in Mosé's Aufide, head of the guards and Faraone's messenger, also [… a] compramario tenor" (Petrobelli 14). Even the character of Anna, Zaccaria's sister, who has such a minor role that "she sings almost exclusively in ensembles," mirrors the role of Maria, Mosé's sister (Petrobelli 14). The parallel between the characters in the two operas illustrates an important part of the operatic form to which I have previously alluded – traditional operatic roles are dictated by voice type: "every type of voice – soprano, tenor, contralto, baritone, etc., – is like an instrument. It is handled in a predetermined way, offers predetermined affects, and lends itself to the expression of certain aspects of human life in preference to others" (Celletti 216). Traditionally, a soprano, such as Abigaille, is the heroine and a tenor, such as Ismaele, is the hero and love interest. A baritone, such as Nabucco, or mezzo-soprano are confidantes to the hero or heroine. A bass, like Zaccaria, whose prophetic tendencies were meant to parallel those of the Biblical Jeremiah, or the High Priest of Baal, or a contralto acts as a villain or figure of authority (Petrobelli 13).

Following the completion of the short score, in which the parallels between Mosé and Nabucco would have been established, Verdi moved into stage five of the composition process, in which he transferred "the draft version to the autograph, adding essential instrumental lines [...] to create [...] a 'skeleton score'" (Parker, "Verdi" 935). From this score, copyists would extract vocal parts for the singers. Not until he "had heard his singers in the theatre" would Verdi finish orchestrating the opera (Parker, "Verdi" 936). In Chapter Two, the relationship between musical notation and the act of vocalization that occurred at this stage will complement my discussion of the transcription process. Verdi's insistence on hearing his singers' voices in the performance space is essential to my argument because of the new vocal category that he created to express the opera's political theme – "power voices," which challenged the traditional vocal assignments employed in Mosé and allowed Verdi to use vocal range and timbre in a political manner (Robinson 168).

Verdi's "power voices" are the "high baritone" and the "dramatic mezzo" soprano. These voices produce "greater volume and intensity of the sound" to "convey an unmistakable sense of power" (Robinson 169). For example, the "weight and darkness" of the baritone voice lends itself "perfectly to the creation of political characters – characters who speak oratorically rather than conversationally" (Robinson 174). This intensity enables Nabucco, Verdi's "first great baritone character," to declare "himself God" with great conviction in Act II, scene ii (Celletti 227; Sadie, Verdi 44). He states, "Giù! prostrati! Non son più re, son Dio!" ["Down! Prostrate! I am no longer king, I am God!"] (Verdi 305-06). A more marked difference between the traditional voice types and the power voice is evident in the role of the dramatic mezzo-soprano. She is able to

create "the most masculine sounds" through the use of chest voice, which was not traditionally used by female singers who were trained to sing predominantly in the head voice (Robinson 174). As Paul Robinson contends, "a mezzo singing in the chest register would be a likely candidate for undertaking masculine things such as politics" (174). Like Nabucco, Abigaille is a prime example a "political animal;" while Verdi gives her a "normal romantic interest, [...] she comes to vocal life only as the mouthpiece for her conquering father [...] whom she eventually deposes in order to make herself monarch of Babylon" (Robinson 175; 175-76). Examples of her political prowess are mirrored vocally "through torrents of coloratura" and Abigaille's extensive vocal range, which is exemplified in her first recitative 'Prode guerrir' ('Brave soldier') (Act I, scene i) where she falls "two octaves from high C to low C (sung in chest voice) on a single syllable" (Robinson 176; Castel "Nabucco" 290).

In addition to using the voices of his principal singers to echo the content of the libretto, Verdi used instrumental aspects of his score, such as the *banda* brass to give the opera a political flavour. A *banda* brass is "a military band" composed of woodwinds and brass, that "appeared on stage in marches, processions, or ballroom scenes" as well as off stage (Kimbell 50; Robinson 164). Verdi's use of the *banda* was influenced by his "youthful career as a bandmaster in his hometown of Busseto" (Robinson 164). The *banda*, which was associated outside of the opera house with "parades, rallies, and speeches," could thus be interpreted politically in the context of an opera (Robinson 164). Although in the ballroom scenes of Verdi's later works such as Rigoletto (1851) and Un Ballo in Maschera (1859) a *banda* brass added an air of verisimilitude, in a period piece like Nabucco its role is to draw a connection between the events on the stage and political

demonstrations in the actual world (Kimbell 455). An audience could associate the *banda* with ideas of military heroism, the power of the state, and political demonstrations in the public sphere. Therefore, Nabucco, which is full of marches, uses the *banda* extensively to provide a militaristic quality to the "orchestral colouring" (Kimbell 455). For example, "in 'É l'Assiria una regina,' ('Assyria is queen') [Act III, scene i] the strumming chords are not left to the strings alone, but are doubled up by horns, bassoons, and cimbasso, while the choral melody is reinforced by trumpets and trombones as well as the woodwinds" (Kimbell 455; Castel, "Nabucco" 331). Other examples of this "brassy reduplication," which gives the timbre a "militaristic edge" can be found in 'Lo vedeste' ('Did you see him') (Act I, scene i) and the "final stages of 'Va, pensiero'" (Kimbell 455, 456, 455; Castel, "Nabucco" 292). Even the way in which "the trumpet ushers in 'D'Egitto là' ('Of Egypt there') [Act I, scene I], and punctuates 'Come notte' ('As night') [Act I, scene I]" demonstrates "that it is extraordinarily difficult to disentangle the religious and military motives" in Nabucco's form and content (Kimbell 456; Castel, "Nabucco" 286, 288). As I discussed in the Introduction, instrumental music lacks the ability to convey narrative elements and thus could not easily be censored. Although the *banda* provides Nabucco with a "flavor of popular, indigenous music making," the unison chorus provided Verdi with the most potent means to express nationalistic sentiments to which audiences could connect (Kimbell 445, 453).

An opera chorus is traditionally composed of "a group of singers with more than one individual singing each part" (McClymonds and Budden 851). Choral parts are divided according to the most common vocal ranges, soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass, which are combined to create textures that range from "homophonic and antiphonal to

imitative and contrapuntal" (McClymonds and Budden 851). The role of an opera chorus in the drama is very similar to the chorus in ancient Greek theatre in which they "commented on the situation, supported solo roles, expressed a mood, accompanied dance and functioned as an active participant in the dialogue" (McClymonds and Budden 851). Because of the large number of members in an opera chorus, they usually assume the role of "collective entities" (McClymond and Budden 850). Conrad Donakowki notes how in Filosofia della Musica [Philosophy of Music] (1836), the important Risorgimento politician Giuseppe Mazzini described an ideal opera chorus as one that "must be treated as a collective individuality as it had in Greek tragedy, where it often personified the polis or the cosmos" (240). This collective sensibility of an opera chorus lends itself to the "nationalist tendency in which the 'hero' [of an opera] may be a whole people," such as the Hebrew slaves in Nabucco (McClymonds and Budden 852). In his entry on Nabucco in The Grove Encyclopedia of Opera, Roger Parker states that, "the true protagonist of the opera is undoubtedly the chorus" ("Nabucco" 546). Support for Parker's claim can be found in the structure of the overture. Traditionally, an overture captures the attention of the audience by presenting the most important melodic themes from the arias in the opera. In Nabucco's overture, many of the themes are taken not from solo arias, but from choruses, including "'Va, pensiero sull'ali dorate,' the famous chorus from Act III" (Budden 96, 97). This chorus will be the focus of my discussion for the remainder of this section.

"Va, pensiero" (Act III, scene ii) is undoubtedly the most well-known piece in Nabucco and one of Verdi's most famous compositions. According to Verdi's

Autobiographical Sketch, the text of "Va, pensiero" was the inspiration for the opera. After receiving the libretto from Merelli, Verdi stated:

> I go home and with an almost violent gesture throw the manuscript on the table, stopping erect in front of it. Falling on the table, the sheaf opens on its own; without knowing how my eyes stare at the page before me, and this verse appears to me: 'Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate.' I glance over the following verses and I receive a deep impression from them, since they are almost a paraphrase of the Bible, which I always found pleasure in reading. (Qtd. in Parker, Introduction xii)

"The text of" of "Va, pensiero" "is a paraphrase of Psalm 137" (Perris 167). I have included the full text of the Psalm as well as the original and translated text of "Va, pensiero" below.

A Hymn of the exiles in Babylon 137.1-9

A. Their present plight [Editor's addition]
By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
we hung up our lyres.
For there our captors
required of us songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

B. Their remembrance of Zion [Editor's addition]
How shall we sing the LORD'S song
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy!

Va, pensiero

Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate;
va, ti posa sio clivi, sui colli,
ove olezzano tepide e molli
l'aure dolci del suolo natal!
Del Giordano le rive saluta
di Sionne le torri atterrate …
Oh, mia patria si bella e perduta!
Oh membranza si cara e fatal!
Apra d'or dei fatidici vati,
perche muta dal salice pendi?
Le memorie nel petto raccendi,
ci favella del tempo che fu!
O simile di Solima ai fait
Traggi un suone di crudo lamento,
o t'inspiri il Signore un concento
che ne infonda al patire virtù!
(Verdi 387-400)

C. Their cry for vengeance [Editor's addition]
Remember, O LORD, against the E'domites
the day of Jerusalem,
how they said, "Rase it, rase it!
Down to its foundations!"
O daughter of Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall he be who requites you
with what you have done to us!
Happy shall he be who takes your little ones
and dashes them against the rock! (Ps. 137.1-9)

[Go, thought

Go, thought, on wings of gold;
go rest on the slopes and hills,
where fragrances tepid and soft
the sweet air of our homeland!
Greet the banks of the Jordan
of Zion's towers fallen …
Oh, my country so beautiful and lost!
Oh, memory so dear and fatal!
Golden harp of the fateful prophesy,
why is it mute on the sloping
willow?
The memories in the breast rekindle,
that speak of times that past!
Oh mindful of Solomon the fates
Crossing a sound of raw lamentation,
or the Lord inspires you with a
melody
that instills virtue in suffering!]

When placed side by side, the first noticeable difference between Psalm 137 and "Va, pensiero" is their length. As I discussed earlier, it was necessary for librettists to reduce the length of "source text[s]" to accommodate the time required to sing a musical phrase (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, "Opera" 408). Therefore, Solera reduced the length of the Psalm in a variety of ways. First, he used the first two lines of the Psalm, "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept," as the setting for "Va, pensiero" (Ps. 137.1). The stage directions preceding the chorus indicate that it takes places on "[l]e sponde dell' Eufrate" ["the banks of the Euphrates"] (Verdi 385). To anchor his adaptation in the source text, Solera used imagery from the original Psalm, such as the "lyre," which is described as an "arpa d'or," and the "willows" ("salice") (Verdi 392-4). Next, instead of dramatizing the entire Psalm, Solera chose to focus on the nostalgic emotional state referred to in the line "when we remembered Zion" (Ps. 137.1). This emotional state is evident in "Va, pensiero" in the lines, "Del Giordano le rive saluta di

Sionne le torri atterrate … Oh, mia patria sì bella e perduta! Oh membranza sì cara e fatal! Apra d'or dei fatidici vati, perche muta dal salice pendi? Le memorie nel petto raccendi, ci favella del tempo che fu!" ["Greet the banks of the Jordan of Zion's towers fallen … Oh, my country so beautiful and lost! Golden harp of the fateful prophecy, why is it mute on the sloping willow? The memories in the breast rekindle, that speak of times that past!"] (Verdi 390-95). As I previously discussed, an aria is meant to be an emotional pause in the action that provides the character with the opportunity for reflection (Machlis and Forney 141). By focusing exclusively on nostalgic longing, Solera shortened the Psalm to an acceptable length and, as opera composer Giacommo Rossini noted, was able to present the piece as an "aria for chorus" (Kimbell 456-57).

Since "Va, pensiero" focuses on memory and longing, Solera almost completely ignored stanzas two and three of Psalm 137. While the piece provides a literal answer to the question "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land?," which begins the second stanza, the only other aspects of this stanza that Solera incorporated are first person pronouns, the significance of which I will discuss below (Psalm 137.4). Even more noticeably, the "cry for vengeance" described in the third stanza plays no role in Solera's adaptation (Psalm 137 C). To understand the reasons for these omissions it is important to examine the way in which collective longing for freedom is expressed grammatically and musically in "Va, pensiero."

The connection between form and content is very significant in "Va, pensiero" – a unison chorus is used to represent, and speak for, a specific community. In "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology," Uri Margolin defines a community as "a group with a shared sense of identity" (591). In "Va, pensiero," this community is the Hebrew slaves

and grammar is used to express their "shared group intentions" (Margolin 593, 591). For example, in stanza one, "[p]lural personal pronouns" such as "we," "us" and "our" are used six times in reference to the Hebrew slaves (Margolin 593; Ps. 137.1-3). In Psalm 137, a dichotomy between the Hebrew slaves and the Babylonians is expressed through the use of these pronouns – the Hebrews are referred to as "us" in stanza one, while the Babylonians are referred to as "they" in stanza three (Ps. 137.3; Ps. 137.7). This dichotomy articulates "a basic sense of us versus them" – oppressor versus oppressed (Margolin 607). In "Va, pensiero," while this dichotomy is expressed implicitly in the chorus' content, it is never referred to directly.

Another important marker of "a shared sense of identity" occurs in the second stanza of Psalm 137, when the plural personal pronoun "we" is juxtaposed with the singular personal pronoun "I" and the first person possessive pronoun "my" (Ps. 137.4-5). In "Va, pensiero," the pronoun "mia" (my) echoes the use of "I" and "my" in phrases from Psalm 137 such as, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither" (Ps. 137.5). Since each member of the community is singing in unison in the chorus, the "I" designates the "individual [...] as part of a collectivity, of a social self" (Margolin 591). Margolin contends that unison is "the only case in which direct discourse features can be preserved on the collective level," and thus it is a powerful means of expressing group solidarity and a "shared sense of identity" (602). As I will demonstrate in Section Two, cultivating "a shared sense of identity" was important to fostering nationalism during the Risorgimento. Later, in Chapter Two, my discussion of the call-and-response structure of spirituals will allow me to juxtapose the role of the unison chorus in Nabucco with the collective responses in spiritual's call-and-response structure.

The expression of a "shared sense of identity" draws an important connection between the theme of collective yearning for "suolo natal" ["native soil"] by the Hebrew slaves in "Va, pensiero" and by Nabucco's audiences, who were subject to Austrian rule (Verdi 389-90). The effect of Austrian oppression on operatic composition and reception will be discussed at length in Section Two. David Kimbell contends:

> The unison chorus was not an unprecedented resource in Italian opera, but never before had it been used so extensively or with such a clear understanding of its demagogic possibilities. In Nabucco it is regularly used as an expression of national solidarity. In unison the Levites curse the traitor, Ismaele – 'Il maledetto non ha fratelli' [(An accursed one has no brethren)]; in unison the Babylonians acclaim Abigaille – 'E l'Assiria una regina'; and most memorably of all, in unison the Hebrews dream nostalgically of their homeland – 'Va, pensiero sull'ali dorate.' It is said that when Rossini heard this piece he observed that it was but an aria for chorus. No one has come closer to defining the secret of its magic. Apparently we all sit in an opera house dreaming or willing ourselves into a state of identification with the serenading tenor, or the heroic baritone, or the lovelorn prima donna. In 'Va, pensiero' the dream has come true. The aria has become, one might say, absolutely democratic, and if the audience felt disposed to join in, no one could legitimately object. (456-57; Castel, "Nabucco" 304)

The "democratic" nature of "Va, pensiero" is emphasized in the prophecy that follows the chorus. For the Hebrews, a "prophet was a man who believed himself to be

the spokesman of God," and thus his words were greatly revered by the community ("Bible" 51). In Act III, scene ii, the assembled slaves are "exhorted by their prophet, Zecharia, to raise their heads proudly" with the promise of freedom (Perris 167). He states, "Del futuro nel buio discerno … Ecco rotta l'ingegna catena! Piombia già sulla perfida arena del leone di Giuda il furor!" ["In the darkness of the future I discern … Here the unworthy chains are broken! The fury of the lion of Judah already falls heavily on the treacherous arena."] (Verdi 403-06). This promise to bring the Hebrew captives out of bondage resonated with the occupied Italian audiences. With "Va, pensiero," Verdi "realized that […] the chorus [could] stand for a whole people – not only the people involved in the world of illusion within the opera, but the people in the theatre audiences who were invited to read into the opera some commentary on their own condition" (Kimbell 456). The chorus could be used to "inspire[]" both the Hebrew slaves in the fictional world and the Italian audiences in the actual world to bear their "patire" ["suffering"] with "virtù" ["virtue"] (Verdi 399-400). This connection would give Verdi's predominantly Catholic audiences with hope that, just as "the [Babylonian] exiles had been permitted to return to their homeland" in Ezra and Nehemiah, Italians might also gain independence on their "suolo natal" ["native soil"] (Donakowski 243; Anderson 7; Verdi 389-90). The subject of the following section will be the way in which Italian audiences interpreted "Va, pensiero" subversively in the context of the Risorgimento and situated it within Italy's national mythology.

Section Two: The Audience

In order to understand the implications of the historically-situated reception of the intermedial adaptation process outlined in Section One, my investigation will now shift from the operatic composer to the audience. While the librettist and composer are responsible for creating an operatic libretto and score, these texts remain mute until they are mediated by the act of vocalization, which allows an audience to access them in a performance setting. In 1637, a significant change took place in the role of the opera audience – Venetian opera houses opened their doors to paying members of the general public (Sadie, History 21; Rosselli, "Sociology" 431). By transforming a courtly art form initially intended for "small aristocratic audiences" into popular entertainment, this event laid the foundation for the role Verdi's operas would play during the Risorgimento (Dallapiccola 193; Rosselli, "Sociology" 431).

Since opera was the "most popular form of bourgeois entertainment" in nineteenth-century Europe, structures of dominance in Italian society are evident in the configuration of the opera house and operatic reception practices (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 4). Like the art form itself, the first opera houses were created in Italy and reproduced throughout Europe. According to the Italian architectural model, the "outer skin" of opera houses were lined with "vertically arranged tiers of boxes [...] set out in a horseshoe, bell or rectangular shape" (Rosselli, "Sociology" 433). Not only was this design acoustically beneficial for operatic vocal production, but it also allowed box holders to have a clear view of both the stage and the patrons below them (Rosselli, "Sociology" 433). The social elite that occupied these boxes was composed of "[a]ristocrats and other socialites [...,] the governors who promoted and subsidized the

opera with public money, the 'theatre directors' who administered the daily workings of the season, [and] the police authorities who maintained decorum, morality, and good order through censorship" (Roccatagliati 16). To reflect the status of its owner, each box was assigned a private dressing room in which "servants could prepare meals and drinks." Patrons with lower social status, such as "artisans and clerical workers," occupied the "'loggione' (literally 'big box') [...] an "unpartitioned gallery at the very top of the house" that was accessible through a separate staircase (Rosselli, "Sociology" 433). On the floor of the theatre in rows of stalls, "domestic workers, and occasional opera-goers stood or purchased seats." It was customary for authorities to seat members of the Austrian military in the first rows of this section so that their presence would be visible from every sight line (Roccatagliati 16). In short, an opera house encompassed both the oppressor and the oppressed.

As the social hierarchy of an opera house demonstrates, opera was a "centre of social discourse" in nineteenth-century Italy and an important part of "everyday life" (Kimbell 53; Fiske 32). Attending the opera was "as much a social as musical event" (Kimbell 53). While contemporary audiences silently watch an opera in the dark, during a performance in nineteenth-century Italy "members of the audience constantly entered or left their boxes, waved and whispered at each other around the auditorium, [and] conducted business in the halls and foyers" (Martin 22). The auditorium was lit primarily by candles that were not dimmed when the performance began so that members of the audience could eat, drink, and gamble, and, in order to maintain engagement with the narrative, read along with their libretto (Martin 22; Rosselli Opera 4).

Until the "mid-nineteenth-century" an opera-goer "would purchase a copy [of the libretto] inside or outside the theatre [...] together with the playbill. [...] Librettos were usually pocket-sized, printed on cheap paper, sewn into wrappers and rife with typographical errors" (Macnutt 1185). In addition to the text of the opera, a traditional libretto, provided information

> about the date of the production, the size and constitution of the orchestra (often with the names of the principals), the names of the composer, the poet, the singers (which enables their mobility, careers and repertories to be studied), the musical director, the impresario, the scene designers, the machinists and other stage staff, the choreographer and the dancers; sometimes it also gives details of the dances performed and, especially in Italy, full synopses of the ballets that were traditionally given on the same bill as operas. (Macnutt 1185)

As the role of the libretto in operatic reception illustrates, the act of traditional operatic reception was truly "plurimedial"; in addition to listening to the singers' voices and watching the drama on stage, audiences read along with the text as it was sung. These many channels of communication, and the large section of society they reached, made opera an important target for Austrian censors.

Censorship has accompanied operatic composition and production "at most times and in most countries" during the genre's history (Rosselli, "Censorship" 801). Governments in many different contexts were suspicious of the theatre as a "potential fount of sedition or disorder" because of the way in which it consistently facilitated a "large public gathering" for a performance that, unlike printed words, was accessible to

"illiterate lower classes" (Rosselli, "Censorship" 801; Goldstein 162). As I discussed in the Introduction, music does not often contain narrative elements, therefore an opera's "libretto and the stage production" were more likely to be subjected to censorship than the music (Rosselli, "Censorship" 801). In Italy, "[n]ot only was the theatre the centre of social life; before the 1848 revolutions it was 'the one field open to the manifestations of public life', a substitute for a parliament or a free press" (Rosselli, Opera 4). Authorities who recognized the subversive potential of opera established "cumbersome censorship apparatuses" that varied between states (Kimbell 24; Goldstein 161; 160). These apparatuses were usually maintained by a "subordinate official" who was trained as a modest "literary man" and concerned primarily with political, religious and moral offences (Roselli, "Censorship" 802; Goldstein 161). Nabucco's religious content allowed the opera to be politically charged while subverting the censorship laws of the ruling Austrians.

Operatic librettos were censored differently in different countries in nineteenth-century Europe according to a country's dominant religious affiliations. For example, in nineteenth-century Britain, it was forbidden to represent Biblical subject matter on stage (Rosselli, "Censorship" 802). As a result, when the Italian operas I discussed in Section One crossed the British border, "Mosé in Egitto's subject matter had to be adapted to deal with Peter the Hermit and [...] Nabucco was renamed Nino and set in a non-biblical period of Babylonian history." In contrast, by the late eighteenth century "Roman Catholic countries" such as Italy "were untroubled by Old Testament [operatic] subject matter" (Rosselli, "Censorship" 802). David Kimbell notes that in Italy, "Dramas based on subjects taken from the Old Testament were permitted when written by celebrated

authors and in sublime style worthy of the subject, and when the theatre and the means of the impresario provide the necessary facilities for presenting them in a dignified and fitting manner" (25). It was only when religious "subjects or expressions [...] were [...] heretical or blasphemous, [... or] transgressed upon the authority of the Church, its clergy or liturgy" that they were considered dangerous (Kimbell 24). Nabucco's diluted Biblical subject matter and La Scala's upstanding reputation made it a difficult opera for authorities to censor. Unlike many of Verdi's later operas, which were heavily censored, Nabucco was "offensive only by allusion"; without the audience's interpretation of the opera's Biblical subject matter as an analogy for their own captivity, its Biblical content was seemingly innocuous (Martin 21).

Due to the volatile political situation during the Risorgimento, censorship of religious subject matter was often eclipsed by concern for "politically charged material" that challenged the "existing socio-political order" (Goldstein 156). Kimbell notes that "Subjects, situations, or phrases that implied disrespect toward sovereigns or established governments, expressions of patriotism or libertarianism, mention of conspiracy or assassination" were all guilty of this offence (25). For example, in Venice the original libretto to Verdi's Rigoletto (1851), with its "implied attack on court life," was initially banned (Jacobs and Sadie 166). The first Rome performance of Verdi's Un Ballo in Maschera (A Masked Ball) (1859), which depicts the "assassination of a king," "was permitted only on condition" that it was set in "seventeenth-century America under British rule"; that way an "English governor, not a king" would be assassinated (Jacobs and Sadie 191; Sadie, Verdi 165). Before the unification of Italy, Verdi's I Vespri Siciliani (Italian Vespers) (1855), which depicts "a thirteenth-century revolt in Southern

Italy against French rule" had to be performed "under the title Giovanna de Guzman, with the rebellion removed to faraway Portugal and directed against Spanish rule in the seventeenth century" (Goldstein 170; Sadie, Verdi 146). The effects of censorship are also evident in Verdi's La Battaglia di Legnano (The Battle of Legnano) (1848), which depicts "a medieval defeat of the Germans by Italian cities" (Goldstein 170; Sadie, Verdi 105). It could only be performed under the title L'Assedio di Haarlem (The Siege of Harlem) (Goldstein 170). Unlike these later operas, Nabucco, with its "remote – and pious – setting" had a "cachet of untouchability" (Perris 167). For example, Zaccaria's final words in his Act I cabaletta, "'Che dia morte allo stranier' ('That gives death to the foreigner')" proceeded "without censorial interference in a huge number of early productions" despite their politically inflammatory connotations (Parker, "Verdi" 939).

Austrian authorities recognized that the opera house, in which such a broad section of Italian society regularly met, was an excellent place to monitor the masses. For example, the "chief minister of Austrian-ruled Lombardy-Venetia [...] urged that the La Scala opera house in Milan be kept busy since 'it attracts to a place open to observation during the hours of darkness a large part of the educated population'" (Goldstein 164). Therefore, Austrian authorities were careful not to censor operas, thus alienating Italian audiences, without good cause. In a statement from Rome in 1837, an advisory committee urged the Pope to increase opera funding because:

> In order for a people to be calm and content with the government to which it finds itself subjected, it is absolutely clear and confirmed by the experience of centuries that the means most fitting and conducive to this end is a suitably distracting theatre, decently entertaining and soberly

> diverting; and particularly at this time the distraction and entertainment of the people is the healthiest cure for the wounds that have been inflicted in almost every part of the world. (Goldstein 164)

By the time of the Risorgimento, it was evident that the opera house, and Nabucco's subversive religious content, could fulfill the role of superfluous distraction while functioning subversively as a site of political protest.

As I have suggested previously, opera was an important part of nineteenth-century Italian popular culture. Popular culture can operate as "a site of struggle" in which often oppressed groups employ "tactics" that challenge structures of dominance (Fiske 20). In the Risorgimento, opera audiences were "producer[s] of meanings and pleasures" (Fiske 27). From this critical perspective, presented by John Fiske in Understanding Popular Culture, "Popular culture is to be found in its practices, not in its texts or their readers, though such practices are often most active in the moments of text-reader interaction" (45). During the Risorgimento, these practices allowed oppressed Italians to have a political voice, just as they allowed African-American slaves to express their yearning for freedom in the antebellum period.

Historians traditionally designate "the period from 1815 to 1870," from the Congress of Vienna to "the constitution of a unified nation-state with its capital at Rome," as the Italian Risorgimento (von Henneberg and Ascoli 6). While Italy traditionally comprises numerous regions, each with different dialects, systems of governance, and traditions, at the time of Verdi's birth they were under predominantly "Napoleonic rule" (Kimbell 3). At the Congress of Vienna, it was "the powers who had defeated Napoleon – Austria, Britain, Prussia and Russia" not the people of Italy, who

determined how these varied regions would to be henceforth governed (Kimbell 4). In Verdi in the Age of the Risorgimento, David Kimbell states:

> [T]he outcome of the Congress of Vienna was the restoration of the multitude of kings, dukes, and grand dukes whose rule had been cut short by Napoleon's conquests. Lombardy and the Veneto were absorbed into the Austrian Empire, the Savoyard monarchy was restored in Piedmont, and the Bourbon monarchy in Naples; the Pope's temporal power was re-established throughout central Italy from Rome to the Po; Austrian archdukes assumed control in Tuscany and Modena; the duchies of Parma and Lucca were restored to a nominal independence. (4)

In the period following 1815, the Italian people began to voice popular discontent with the experience of exile that resulted from being held captive in their own land. Examples of dissent against Austrian occupation include the Piedmontese Revolt of 1820-21 and the attempts to set up provisional governments, which occurred in Modena, Bologna, and Parma in 1831 (Kimbell 5). Kimbell contends that these uprisings were thwarted "because the Italian patriotic and revolutionary movements of the period [suffered from a] lack of common idealism." He notes that the "strength of local patriotisms, the jealous pride in local traditions, [and] the mutual distrust between one region and the next" were major stumbling blocks on the path to creating a unified Italian front during the Risorgimento (5).

The Risorgimento is the foundation story of the Italian nation. As Krysta von Henneberg and Albert Russell Ascoli write, "All nations – especially new or troubled ones – demand foundation stories" to legitimize and bolster a sense of collective identity

(6). The term Risorgimento, meaning "resurgence," was "coined by the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century authors Vittorio Alfieri, Ugo Foscolo and Giacomo Leopardi" and was meant to evoke "an earlier period of cultural rebirth and acknowledged Italian greatness known as the Renaissance" (von Henneberg and Ascoli 6). It was meant to "suggest the immanent and inevitable nature of the Italian nation, whose foundations were understood to lie a far back as the Roman Republic and Empire, or, at least, the founding of a Rome-centered Christian church in the early centuries CE" (von Henneberg and Ascoli 6). Yet, this myth of a "culturally and linguistically pure Italy [...] contrasted markedly with the cultural and linguistic diversity of the peninsula" (von Henneberg and Ascoli 7). Opera, with its long tradition in different regions of Italy, was a force that could transcend these limited identities and cultivate a sense of Italian "cultural unity." Not only had opera originated in Italy during the Renaissance, one of the periods to which Risorgimento thinkers looked for inspiration, but touring operatic productions also transcended regional borders (Rosselli, Opera 4). By looking beyond their differences, the Italian people were able to use this common cultural background to unite them against the Austrian oppressors and cultivate "a shared sense of [national] identity." This became evident as the Risorgimento progressed and the Austrians "increasingly [came] to be seen as the villains of the piece, [while] the heroes were not so much those who manned the barricades [...] as the men who built up Italian self-awareness" through cultural means (Kimbell 5). Verdi is an important example of a figure that blurred the boundary between art and politics to foster Italian nationalism. As von Henneberg and Ascoli contend, "perhaps the best known example of Risorgimento's 'cultural politics'" is "the myth of Giuseppe Verdi's supposed representation of nationalist sentiments in the

aria "Va, pensiero" from Nabucco and in other choral outpourings from his early operas" (14). These politics are evident in the way in which opera audiences manufactured meaning from the reception of a "Risorgimento opera" such as Nabucco.

Nabucco is exemplary of a trend in many of Verdi's operas – themes of dominance and oppression that could not be discussed in Italian society were articulated on stage. As Herbert Lindenberger notes in Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage, "Not only in Verdi but throughout later nineteenth-century opera, [...] the audience's sympathy is directed principally to the 'other,' whether in the guise of a woman, of Oriental, or of some oppressed political group" (73). The plight of the Hebrews in Nabucco is the first example of this theme in Verdi's *oeuvre*, although it was repeated in subsequent operas; interesting examples include the Scots in MacBeth (1847), the Flemish in Don Carlos (1884) and the Ethiopians in Aida (Lindenberger, History 73). The importance of the theme of oppression reveals Verdi's "tendency [...] to build up a dramatic theme" around main characters whose "fates will inextricably be involved the fates of entire peoples," which would resonate with audiences grappling with issues of national identity (Kimbell 445). Within this context, "Nabucco is not just about Nabucco and Abigaille and Fenena; it involves a confrontation of Hebrews and Babylonians" just as I Lombardi depicts the conflict between the Crusaders and Saracens and Alzira (1845) addresses the dispute between the Spaniards and Peruvians (Kimbell 445). By exploring the theme of captivity and oppression, Verdi's "opera plots expose tyrants and tyrannies over individuals and upon whole peoples" that the oppressed groups are able to overcome (Perris 166). Examples of these plots include "the self-indulgence of the duke of Rigoletto," "the despotism of Phillip II of Spain over the Flemish in Don Carlos," "the

enslavement of the Ethiopian war victims by the Pharoh in Aida," and, of course, Nebuchadnezzar's enslavement of the Hebrews in Nabucco (Perris 166). When the "Hebrews proclaim the supremacy of Jehovah" in the final scene of Nabucco, the message to the oppressed Italians was this: "A captive people may win freedom if they will endure years of tribulation" (Perris 168). The audience's identification with the enslaved chorus in Nabucco set in motion a complex mythology with Verdi and "Va, pensiero" at its centre that influenced the way in which these later operas were received. In Section One, I examined the poetic aspect of "Va, pensiero." In the discussion that follows I will evaluate the cultural implications of this chorus in the founding myth of Italy.

Verdi's credentials as a "Risorgimento composer" are often traced to Nabucco (Smart, "Liberty" 103). Following Nabucco's premiere, the Gazetta privilegiate di Milano reported that "the new opera composed by the young maestro Verdi on a lyric drama by Solera, entitled Nabucodonosor,[5] was performed at our Gran Teatro with clamorous and total success" (qtd. in Kimbell 108). This success was reflected by the audience in "everyday life," which has been referred to as the "Nabochodonorization" of Milan (Kimbell 109). Verdi's Autobiographical Sketch outlines this process: "The name of Verdi was in every mouth; even fashion, even cookery borrowed his name, making hats *alla Verdi*, shawls *alla Verdi*, and sauces *alla Verdi*" (Lessona qtd. in Kimbell 109). The initial popularity of Nabucco spawned a myth about the opera's opening night that solidified the political connotations of "Va, pensiero." In "Liberty On (and Off) the

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[5] The opera's original name Nabucodonosor was changed to Nabucco at a "revival at the Teatro Giglio" in Corfu (Budden 20). It is important to note the similarity of the spelling of this title to the titles of two of the "source" texts for Nabucco that I have previously discussed, Anicet-Bourgeouis and Cornu's play Nabuchodonosor and Cortesi's ballet Nabuccodonosor.

Barricades: Verdi's Risorgimento Fantasies," Mary Ann Smart outlines the structure of this myth:

> Details vary, but stories of the political uses of Verdi during the Risorgimento tend to concern choruses, and they usually center around spontaneous outpourings of emotion, moments when Verdi's music enabled the populace to express patriotic sentiments forbidden in any guise except the relatively 'safe,' 'meaningless' medium of song. The best known of the Risorgimento anecdotes concerns Verdi's first great success, Nabucco. As the story goes, the audience at the Milan premiere (1842) demanded a repetition of the famous chorus of chained Hebrew slaves, 'Va, pensiero,' in contravention of the Austrian's prohibition of encores. Afterward, enthusiasm for 'Va, pensiero' spread across Italy, sparking not only more encores, but also spontaneous choral outbursts, with Verdi's catchy tune moving entire audiences to burst into song. ("Verdi" 33)

Notable examples of this story can be found in Verdi: His Life and Times by Peter Southwell-Sanders and in The Verdi Companion, edited by William Weaver and Martin Chusid. An account by George Martin in "Verdi the Risorgimento," included in The Verdi Companion, states:

> At the premiere at La Scala, and at most performances later and elsewhere, despite police prohibitions against repeats, the audience demanded the chorus be sung again. The police disliked repeats, for they were apt to become demonstrations against the Austrian officials in the boxes, but if the audience insisted, what could the conductor do? Generally he shrugged

> his shoulders and later pled that it seemed more dangerous to balk the audience than to satisfy it. In any event, why not repeat a chorus that was based on the Bible? (21)

This myth has been questioned by Roger Parker, the editor of the critical edition of Nabucco that I use in my research. When Parker "attempted to trace the story of the spontaneous, unruly 'Va, pensiero' encore back to reviews of the opera's premiere," he discovered "that the encore had actually been demanded for a completely different chorus in Nabucco, the Hebrew prayer, "Immenso Jehova" (Smart, "Verdi" 34). While the dissolution of this fantasy reveals that "Verdi's patriotic reputation originated much later" than Nabucco's premiere and "was in fact constructed retrospectively," it does not diminish the impact that this story has had on Nabucco's reception and on Verdi's later operas (Smart, "Verdi" 33). Regardless of whether or not audiences embraced "Va, pensiero" as a nationalistic anthem at Nabucco's premiere, the nationalistic effect of the chorus functioned in the same way in hindsight. For example, Smart contends that in

> later compositions Verdi deliberately imitated the musical features that make 'Va, pensiero' inherently suitable as a patriotic hymn. The unison melody and decasyllabic meter that characterize 'Va, pensiero' reappeared the following year in 'O Signore dal tetto natio' ('Oh Lord, from our roofs native') (I Lombardi alla prima crociata), with poetry by the same librettist as Nabucco, Temistocle Solera. Verdi returned to the topos in both Ernani ('Si irdesti il Leon di Castiglia') ('Let it be reawakened, the Lion of Castille') and Macbeth ('O patria oppressa'), ('Oh fatherland oppressed') as if making a concerted effort to establish the patriotic chorus as a new

operatic genre. (38-39; Castel, "Lombardi" 58; Castel, "Ernani" 227; Martin 23)

While Italian audiences may not have spontaneously erupted after first hearing "Va, pensiero," the prevalence of this story set the stage for "patriotic response[s]" to his later operas. For example, in Macbeth (1847), when a chorus of Scottish exiles sing "O patria oppressa" ("O fatherland oppressed"), Venetian audiences threw floral bouquets in the Italian colours of red and green onto the stage to express their political affiliations (Martin 22-23). When the Austrian authorities forbade these coloured flowers in the theatre, the audience threw bouquets of the Austrian colours, yellow and black (Martin 23). When the Italian singers refused "to pick them up," their political affiliations were again confirmed (Martin 23). Another notable example occurred at the premiere of I Lombardi. When the tenor sang, "La Santa Terra oggi nostra sara" (The Holy Land today will be ours)," and the chorus replied with "Si! ... Guerra! Guerra!" (Yes! ... War! War!)," the audience erupted and "the police were unable to stop" an encore. Finally, the line "Avrai to l'universo, Resti l'Italia a me" (You may have the universe, but leave Italy to me)" from Atilla (1846) became "an anti-Austrian slogan." Audiences waited for this fateful line and if police ordered it edited from a performance, a demonstration would occur in the theatre (Martin 22). If the spontaneous outburst at the premiere of Nabucco did not actually occur, its story was enough to perpetuate the myth of "Va, pensiero" in Italy's national mythology and support Verdi's political image.

Verdi's role as a political composer was solidified by "the early 1850's" by which time he had "become the most famous and frequently performed Italian composer in Europe" (Parker, "Verdi" 939). His popularity was magnified significantly in Italy due

to his political affiliations. In 1858, when Verdi traveled to Naples, the acrostic "Viva Verdi" was created and quickly became part of popular usage (Jacobs and Sadie 158). This seemingly innocuous slogan was really a political acrostic that stood for 'Viva *V*ittorio *E*manuele *R*e *D'I*talia,'" [Long Live Victor Emmanuel King of Italy] a sentiment that could not be expressed openly in Bourbon Naples since it was "King Victor Emanuel of Piedmont, whom liberal opinion hoped to make king of a united Italy (as actually happened in 1861)" (Jacobs and Sadie 158). After the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, Verdi was invited by Count Camillo di Cavour to join the newly established parliament in an attempt to bolster public support and in 1875 he became a Senator (Riall xiii; Weaver and Chusid 286; Donakowski 246; Beales and Biagini 74). Despite these political successes, near the end of his life, "Verdi chose strategic withdrawal: physically behind the walls of Sant'Agata, mentally into an image of himself as a rough, untutored man of the soil, the peasant from Roncole, an 'authentic' Italian" (Parker, "Verdi" 943). He wished to project the image that the "vate del Risorgimento (bard of Italy's struggle towards national unity)" was "a self-made man, the 'authentic' product of an emerging nation" (Parker, "Verdi" 944).

By the time of his death, Verdi's image as a "spokesperson" for the Italian community during the Risorgimento had become his legacy in Italy's national mythology (Margolin 604). As John A. Davis notes, "When Verdi died in 1901, the crowd at his grave softly and spontaneously sang" "Va, pensiero" (220). During the official funeral ceremonies, "a solemn procession through Milan accompanied by hundreds of thousands of mourners assisted the transfer of his remains to their final resting place" (Parker, "Verdi" 932). Led by conductor Arturo Toscanini and "supported by the chorus and

orchestra of La Scala," the mourners again sang this famous unison chorus (Smart 37). Smart contends that, "This last 'spontaneous' outburst, [... is] the perfect symbol for a process of retrospective mythologization, in which the significance of Verdi's music for the Risorgimento is pushed further and further back in time, the nostalgic-pastoral hymn 'Va, pensiero' playing an ever more central role" ("Verdi" 37-38). The process of mythologization affected not only contemporary audiences, but also scholars, whose perpetuation of the myth have influenced the way in which Nabucco has been interpreted.

Section Three: The Critic

The role of opera in society has shifted considerably since the nineteenth century, when Nabucco enjoyed its initial success. As a result, new operas are no longer being regularly produced due to the large cost associated with commissioning, mounting, and attending lavish productions. This decline in the creation of new works has led to the continual production of a standardized repertoire of canonical operas such as Nabucco. The constant repetition and reproduction of this canon in different cultural contexts has obscured the social significance an opera held at the time it was composed. The experience of attending a contemporary opera also differs greatly from the nineteenth-century reception practices; translated surtitles have replaced the libretto and audiences sit quietly in their seats in a darkened auditorium, interacting socially only at specified intermissions. With the advent of television and recording technology, the theatre stopped being a centre of social activity. An opera can now be watched or listened to in solitude, devoid of the personal interactions that facilitated Nabucco's social significance.

As a result of these transformations, in his analysis of Aida, Said describes opera as a "curatorial art, whose rigor and contending frame recall, with relentless mortuary

logic, a precise historical moment and a specifically dated form" (Culture 130). The metaphor that Said employs is one of death. It implies that opera is a dated artifact or specimen, worthy of study, but located in a very different time and place. In Opera: The Undoing of Women, Catherine Clement breathes some life into this definition and makes the study of opera a worthy pursuit in "contemporary humanistic scholarship." As Clement contends, "This is a meditative period that we are in now, one in which opera, exhausted on the level of creation, is rediscovering its sources through [...] historical reading[s]" such as I have undertaken in this chapter (19).

Curtain Call

As the curtain falls on this section of my investigation, it is necessary to situate the research I have presented in this chapter within the larger comparative framework of my thesis. In this chapter I explored the common conception that, during the Risorgimento, "The bridge between Italy's high culture and daily life was built on the music of Giuseppe Verdi" (Davis 219-20). In 1845, three years after Nabucco premiered, a reporter writing for the Knickerbocker Magazine described African-American spirituals, which are exemplary products of "daily life," as "a rude kind of opera, combining the poetry of motion, of music, and of language" (qtd. in Southern 212). In Chapter Two: Crossing the River Jordan on the Underground Railroad, I will compare the structure of classical composition, reception, and interpretation outlined in this chapter to African-American spirituals. This comparative framework will allow me to see across the barriers of "high culture" that have traditionally confined spirituals and create a "bridge" between these two "musico-literary" genres.

Chapter Two

Spirituals: Crossing the River Jordan on the Underground Railroad

Introduction

While opera is a "generic term" that references "staged sung drama" in a variety of historical and cultural contexts, the term "African-American spiritual" describes to a "musico-literary" genre that was born of a particular time and place (Sadie, History 1; Brown and Williams 675; Scher 242). There are two parts to this term: the hyphenated adjective "African-American" refers to the African captives taken to colonial America to work as slaves, while the adjective "spiritual" refers to the religious content of these songs, which distinguishes them from work and plantation songs of the same period. A spiritual "is a term for a religious folk song that came into being outside an established church (black or white)" (Kerman 376). In this chapter I will explore the aesthetic and cultural implications of adapting a canonical literary text into selected spirituals during a formative historical period in the genre's country of origin. To establish a "plurality of vision" that situates my research in a comparative context, this chapter will be divided into the same three sections as Chapter One: the composer; the audience; and the critic (Said, "Reflections" 186; Trowell 1194).

My focus in Section One: The Composer will be on the poetic aspects of African-American spirituals. To transcend the limitations placed upon spirituals by traditional literary studies, I will use an "approach to [...] music making" outlined by Christopher Small in Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration of Afro-American Music (13-14). I will begin by applying a definition of folk music adopted by the International Folk Music Council to selected spirituals to allow me to assess the

relationship of this "musico-literary" genre to the classical tradition. My discussion of this relationship will lead into an examination of the transcription process through which orally transmitted texts were transposed into a literary form. To evaluate the poetic implications of this process, I will compare two representative versions of the famous spiritual "Go down, Moses," one from J.B.T. Marsh's The Story of the Jubilee Singers (1881) and the other from the second volume of Henry Thacker Burleigh's The Celebrated Negro Spirituals. My assessment of the structural devices and "coded language" used in these adaptations will set the stage for my exploration of the cultural and social implications of vocalization in Section Two (Lovell 198).

Section Two: The Audience will focus on spirituals as "verbal artifact[s]" (Groos 10). As in Chapter One, I will employ a cultural reading strategy to assess the way in which the performance of spirituals is a socially and historically situated event (Bell 420). I will begin with an exploration of the role of oppression and religion in nineteenth-century slave communities. To demonstrate the way in which the Biblical content of spirituals functioned as a form of resistance to the dominant structures that oppressed slaves, I will evaluate the correlation between the content of "Go down, Moses" and the journeys undertaken by Harriet Tubman, a famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. As in my examination of "Va, pensiero," I will explore the retrospective mythology that surrounds "Go down, Moses" and its influence on the reception and interpretation of this spiritual.

In Section Three: The Critic, I will examine the role of spirituals in contemporary society. To assess the space spirituals occupy "within the purview of contemporary humanistic scholarship," I will explore the legacy of spirituals in post-slavery America

(Groos 10). By investigating the way in which spirituals were composed, received, and interpreted, I will demonstrate that to "see (or hear) beyond the words on the printed page," a critic must transcend the racial and Eurocentric musical boundaries that have traditionally been imposed on this "musico-literary" genre (Trowell 1193; Rosand qtd. in Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera xv).

Section One: The Composer

Since its origins, "America was heavily dependent on coerced labor;" it was this oppressive situation from which African-American slaves emerged (Kolchin 3). In 1619, the first slave ship from Africa landed in Jamestown, Virginia, beginning "more than two hundred years" of American slavery (Kolchin 3; Southern 1, 3). "[C]lamped in irons and wedged into foul vessels," it is estimated that between ten and eleven million "living slaves crossed the Atlantic Ocean from the sixteenth [...] through the nineteenth century" (Southern 3; Kolchin 22). As Edward Said contends in "Reflections on Exile," "Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, [and] contrapuntal" (186). This contrapuntal experience was manifested in the combination of elements of "African musical expression" with a foundational Western religious narrative to which African-American slaves were exposed by the dominant group in America (Lovell 88; Kolchin 41).

The "musico-literary" form of African-American spirituals was influenced most profoundly by the oral traditions slaves brought with them from Africa. The oral characteristics of spirituals have resulted in their categorization as folk songs by the dominant European musical tradition. At the 1954 International Folk Music Conference

in São Paulo, Brazil, the International Folk Music Council adopted a definition of folk music that states:

> Folk music is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The factors that shape the tradition are: (i) continuity which links the present with the past; (ii) variation which springs from the creative individual or the group; and (iii) selection by the community, which determines the form or forms in which the music survives. (Qtd. in Lovell 12)

To create a framework in which to evaluate the influence of oral transmission on the form and content of spirituals, I will address each of the points outlined in this definition.

As I noted previously, the "continuity which links the present with the past" was forcibly severed for Africans when they were brought to colonial America. "[O]ral modes of communication," such as singing, which were an important means of transmitting and preserving information in African society, gave illiterate slaves a connection to their past, while also enabling them to carry information with them when they were sold or transferred between plantations (Lovell 12; Sidran xiv). This allowed slaves to establish new forms of continuity in America.

Secondly, the definition requires that "variation springs from the creative individual or the group" (Lovell 12). In Chapter One I described how, in the operatic tradition, the librettist and composer fulfill quite rigid roles in the compositional process. Thus, it is easy for scholars to identify authoritative versions of operatic works, such as the edition of Nabucco I used in my research. In contrast, "folksongs are created by nonprofessional musicians" and "performed by the common people," making it difficult

to definitively establish their provenance (Southern 215). Christopher Small proposes a way of examining spirituals that takes these inherent ambiguities into account. He states, "What we call African-American music [...] is not a collection of sound-objects, or a repertory of pieces, or even a group of musical styles narrowly considered, but an approach to the act of music making, a way of playing and of responding to music" (13-14). The "approach" not only encompasses the performance practices that I will discuss in Section Two, but it also allows critics to acknowledge the importance of improvisation and variation in the composition process.

Musical improvisation is "closely related to performance practices" in African-American spirituals (Southern 211). The improvisational quality of spirituals is best demonstrated by their call and response form in which "solo verses alternate with refrain lines" between multiple performers (Lovell 201; Southern 189). Just as an opera uses both principal singers and a chorus, in African-American spirituals, " a song lead, or solo vocalist, sang the verse and a chorus handled the refrain" (Stewart 26). This musical texture allowed singers to follow "the lead melody for the most part but [...] wander away from it when the tones were too high, or when the text called for special emphasis, or simply when their whims indicated the need for more variety" (Southern 211). Singers and audiences also improvised physical elements of traditional African musical performances such as "hand clapping, foot tapping, or swaying of the body" (Southern 212). It is important to note that "[p]erformances of spirituals were frequently African-derived dance known as a ring shout (or simply shout). This was a type of ceremonial dance in which the participants gathered in the middle of the floor and, with the start of the spiritual, moved or shuffled around in a circle, sometimes for hours" (Stewart 22). As

this dance demonstrates, improvisation not only involved the audience in the composition of a piece, but it also incorporated them into its performance. Like opera, the spiritual is a "hybrid" medium combining text, music, and movement in a performance (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 9).

The third and last part of the definition by the Folk Music Council states that "selection by the community determines what form or forms in which the music survives" (Lovell 12). Since folk songs are the products of "everyday life," their content reflects the circumstances of their composition and subsequent performances (Fiske 32). Therefore, the subject matter of spirituals is often "limited to those matters, attitudes, concerns, and feelings on which the community is in maximal accord" (qtd. in Lovell 9). The relevance of this content to the community ensures that a song will be reproduced in the oral tradition, "where acceptance means that consensus has taken place over and over again through time" (qtd. in Lovell 9). While this form of selection took place by the African-American community throughout the colonial and antebellum periods, in the period following the Civil War, when the conditions in which spirituals were created and transmitted no longer existed, responsibility to select spirituals for preservation fell to the dominant group that these songs had originally resisted. White Americans had the literary and musical training and social status that was needed to disseminate spirituals outside of the African-American community during this period. As D.K. Wilgus contends, "There is no trustworthy evidence [about spirituals] before the Civil War" because illiterate African-Americans were not able or permitted to record their spirituals in a literary form (qtd. in Epstein, Sinful 191). The preservation of spirituals by white collectors following the Civil War halted the process of oral transmission by freezing a "particular version" of

a song in space and time (Lovell 422). Therefore, while these transcriptions have preserved spirituals for future generations, they also preserved the contemporary biases that influenced their collection. Modern critics must take these biases into account if they are to acknowledge that the historical and musical "evidence" provided by transcriptions is often far from "trustworthy" (Wilgus qtd. in Epstein, Sinful 191).

The first important bias that affected the transcription of spirituals was racial prejudice toward African-Americans. In the Introduction to Slave Songs of the United States, African-Americans are described as "half-barbarous people" (Allen, Ware, and Garrison ii). This was a common attitude of the time that affected how spirituals were received outside of the African-American community. As Dena Epstein notes, when Slave Songs of the United States was published, "even the most sympathetic critics stressed the curious aspects of the collection. They could not conceive that these songs were worthy of appreciation" ("Songs" 693). Ironically, it was the European composer Antonin Dvořák who saw past the racism that plagued this genre. In 1892, Dvořák came to America to study American popular music, "including Americanized versions of European folk songs, hymns, white spirituals, Negro spirituals, and Indian chants" (Lovell 23). Without being deafened by racial prejudice, he concluded that:

> The most potent as well as the most beautiful (among American songs) [...] according to my estimation are certain of the so-called plantation melodies and slave songs [...]. The music of the people is like a rare and lovely flower growing amidst encroaching weeds. Thousands pass it, while others trample it under foot, and thus the chances are that it will perish before it is seen by the one discriminating spirit who will prize it

> above all else. The fact that no one has as yet arisen to make the most of it does not prove that nothing is there. (Qtd. in Lovell 10)

"[D]iscriminating" collectors who saw past racial barriers were often unable to approach spirituals on their own terms because of the European musical biases they held. Collectors of African-American spirituals were not usually members of the African-American community or "professional musicians" (Epstein, "Songs" 693). For the most part, they were "persons stationed in the South during the war [such] as newspapermen, army officers, missionaries, teachers, or agents of freedmen's aid societies or the Freedmen's Bureau" who has access to, and interest in, these songs (Epstein, "Songs" 693). Thus, the varying musical knowledge of collectors, and the inadequacy of that knowledge to account for musical and verbal aspects of spirituals, led to a great deal of discrepancy between transcriptions (Epstein, "Songs" 693). For example, some collectors, such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a Unitarian minister whose article "Negro Spirituals" appeared in The Atlantic Monthly in June 1867, recorded the songs' texts without their melodies (Higginson 11, 12). Other collectors transcribed only skeletal melodies and words, while others created "harmonized arrangements" that "had little or no relation to the original" since, unlike opera, "[s]pirituals were originally performed without instrumental accompaniment" due to restrictions that slave owners placed upon the use of instruments such as drums (Johnson and Johnson, Preface 47; Stewart 37; Sidrian 16). As I discussed earlier, even if collectors were well-versed in the European musical tradition, their expertise often did not help them since spirituals "included elements that could not be transcribed in conventional [European] notation" (Epstein, "Songs" 693). Musical elements such as "blue notes, glissandos, growls, polyrhythms,

and the overlapping of leader and chorus in the call and response style" caused transcribers such difficulty that they "admitted to uncertainty about the accuracy of the songs they [...] recorded" (Southern 200). For example, in 1862, Lucy McKim Garrison, one of the editors of Slave Songs of the United States, wrote that "It is difficult to express the entire character of these Negro ballads by mere musical notes and signs. The odd turns made in the throat, and the curious rhythmic effect produced by single voices chiming in at irregular intervals, seem almost as impossible to place on the score as the singing of birds or the tones of an Aeolian Harp" (qtd. in Southern 200). This difficulty led to unreliable transcriptions that did not accurately preserve many of the orally-transmitted elements that distinguished spirituals.

Verbal elements of the text also gave collectors great difficulty. African-American dialects were not "uniform and fixed," since "idioms and pronunciation" varied between different speakers and regions (Johnson and Johnson, Preface 43). In the Preface to The Books of American Negro Spirituals, James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson contend:

> Nor is the generally spoken Negro dialect the fixed thing it is made to be on the printed page. It is variable and fluid. Not even in the dialect of any particular section is a given word always pronounced the same [...]. How a word is pronounced is governed by the preceding and following sounds. Sometimes the combination permits of a liaison so close that to the uninitiated the sound of the word is almost lost. (43)

Different collectors dealt with these variations in different ways; some chose to eliminate traces of dialect completely, while others transcribed the text phonetically. For example,

in J.B.T. Marsh's The Story of the Jubilee Singers (1881) a spiritual is titled "In the River Jordan," while in Henry Burleigh's Negro Spirituals (1919), a title which contains three of the same words is written, "I Stood on de Ribber ob Jerdon" (153; 25). The inconsistency between these spellings makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to replicate how the text of a spiritual would have originally sounded.

In addition to diction, vocal timbre and technique also caused collectors great difficulty since the modes of vocal production used in spirituals were very different from those employed in European classical vocal music. As the Introduction to Slave Songs of the United States notes, "The best that we can do, with paper and types, or even with voices, will convey but a faint shadow of the original. The voices of the coloured people have a peculiar quality that nothing can imitate; and the intonations and delicate variations of even one singer cannot be reproduced on paper" (Allen, Ware, and Garrison iv-v). In an attempt to compensate for this shortcoming, the editors of this collection included a section entitled "Directions for Singing" (Allen, Ware, and Garrison n.p.). Even instructions such as these could not ensure an accurate reproduction of the aural aspects of a vocal performance, nor could they compensate for physical aspects of a performance, such as dancing, which were ignored by transcribers. Unlike composers, who can incorporate staging directions into the score, transcribers often dismissed the physical aspects of performance such as the shout as "barbaric," and thus failed to preserve this aspect of the performance in their transcriptions (Higginson 12).

To account for the musical and linguistic shortcomings of the transcriptions I am examining, I will apply Small's assertion that African-American music is an "approach to the act of music making" to the remainder of my investigation. My analysis of this

"approach" will begin with an exploration of the intermedial adaptation of a Biblical narrative into spirituals in this Section, followed by an examination of the social significance of spirituals in Section Two.

Unlike the Israelites in Psalm 137 who ask, "How shall we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?," African-Americans slaves "could and did sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land" by adapting Biblical narratives into spirituals (Ps. 137.4; Lovell 63). In Deep River and The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death, Howard Thurman contends that there were three major, and interconnected, "source[s]" for spirituals – "the Old and New Testaments, the world of nature, and [...] personal experiences of religion" (18; Wolf 254). While my focus is on the adaptation of Old Testament narratives, it is necessary to discuss the connection between symbols from each of these sources to understand the way in which the form and content of spirituals functioned subversively.

The Old and New Testaments provided slaves with the most important material for spirituals. Said asserts, "Exiles feel [...] an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology" (Said, "Reflections" 177). Biblical stories provided slaves with three important aspects of this ideology: "symbolization of the deliverer or overcoming the oppressors; inspiration from notable accomplishments under almost impossible circumstances [...]; and exemplification of the workings of faith and power" (Lovell 257). Notable examples of spirituals with Biblical themes include: "Go down, Moses"; "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel"; "Sweet Canaan"; "Father Abraham"; "Oh, Didn't it Rain"' "Balm in Gilead"; and "Wrestle On, Jacob." The Biblical characters in these spirituals were admired because

> they represented solid traits of character [that were germane to the slave situation]. Noah ['Oh, Didn't it Rain' … was admired] for his goodness, manhood, and concern for peace. Jacob ['Wrestle On, Jacob'] because he showed how a man could rise step by step. Moses ['Go Down Moses'] for his leadership and preoccupation with freedom. […] Daniel ['Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?'] for his courage and wisdom. (Lovell 289)

By aligning themselves with these characters and their stories, slaves were able to collectively identify with the position of the Jews in the Old Testament. Johnson and Johnson contend:

> It is not possible to estimate the sustaining influence that the trials and tribulations of the Jews as related in the Old Testament exerted upon the Negro. This story at once caught and fired the imaginations of the Negro bards, and they sang, sang their hungry listeners into a firm faith that God saved Daniel in the lion's den, so he would save them; as God preserved the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, so would He preserve them; as God delivered Israel out of bondage in Egypt, so would He deliver them. (Preface 20-21)

The spiritual, 'Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?' is exemplary of this assertion. Since Daniel was a "Defier of kings and their lions; proof that all men can resist slavery and be delivered," this spiritual asks, "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel, D'liver Daniel, d'liver Daniel, Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel, And why not every man? He deliver'd Daniel from the lion's den, Jonah from the belly of the whale, And the Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, And why not every man?" (Lovell 260; Marsh, "Didn't" 134). To ensure

that the content of the Biblical stories they adapted resonated with their audiences, composers and singers, who were often one and the same, used a consistent set of formal devices in their adaptations, which I will now examine.

The first important formal device used in adaptations of Biblical narratives is that of "personal pronouns" (Lovell 204). The word "my" in the title of 'Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?' demonstrates this usage. First person pronouns ensured that each of the singers involved in a spiritual's call-and-response pattern would connect individually with the song's content. The first verse of 'Sweet Canaan' uses this device in an exemplary way: "Oh, the land I am bound for, Sweet Canaan's happy land I am bound for, Sweet Canaan's happy land I am bound for, Sweet Canaan's happy land, Pray give me your right hand" (243). Coupled with personal pronouns such as "my" and "I" are terms that denote "family and community" such as "father, brother, sister, mother, member, seeker, sinner, etc." (Lovell 204). These terms had special importance for slaves because it was probable that they would have been severed from their families either in Africa or America. As Howard Thurman notes, "When the slaves were taken from their homeland, the primary social unit was destroyed, and all the immediate tribal and family ties were ruthlessly broken" (39). By incorporating first and third person pronouns, the singer situated himself in a "community" and gave himself hope of seeing his loved ones again (Margolin 593, 591). The verses of "Roll, Jordan, Roll" are exemplary of the way in which first person pronouns are combined with second person pronouns and proper nouns. The first verse states, "Roll, Jordan, roll, roll, Jordan, roll, I want to go to heaven when I die, To hear Jordan roll" (Marsh, "Roll" 131). The chorus that follows is repeated seven times. The first time it is sung, the text reads, "Oh, brothers, you ought to have

been there, Yes, my Lord! A sitting in the Kingdom, To hear Jordan roll" (Marsh, "Roll" 131). In the following repetitions, "brothers" is substituted for "preachers," "sinners," "mourners," "seekers," "mothers," and "sisters" (Marsh, "Roll" 131).

Another important formal device is "immediacy" (Lovell 214). Lovell states, "In the usual religious hymns and white spirituals Biblical events happen at a distance or through simile or other figure of speech. In the Afro-American spiritual, as [Russell] Ames puts it, "Biblical history is taking place right before your eyes [...] you are included in the action" (qtd. in Lovell 214). In "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?" the singer asks, if the Lord delivered Daniel in Biblical times, why could He not deliver a contemporary captive? Another notable example of "immediacy" can be found in "Balm in Gilead," which reads: "There is a Balm in Gilead, To make the wounded whole There is a Balm in Gilead, to heal the sinsick soul" (4). The use of the present tense gives the illusion that "justice, [... which] may lie in heaven, [... could] be sought also on earth" and challenged nineteenth-century African-American slaves to apply the story's message to their contemporary situation (Small 84).

The next important device employed in adaptations is the "use of command and request" (Lovell 214). This device allowed slaves, who were subordinate and often not able to control their situation, to express their feelings and opinions openly. As I previously noted, the question "why not every man?" in "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?" demonstrates this point (134). Another notable example of this device, which I will discuss at length later in this section, occurs in "Go down, Moses" when the refrain commands: "Let my people go" (Marsh, "Go" 142).

The last device used in spirituals to connect the singer and audience to the Bible's "triumphant ideology" is "the use of the listener as a creative device" (Lovell 214). In "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel?" this device is manifested in the title's interrogative form. As with the use of "command and request," this form draws the listener into the song, forcing him to answer the questions asked of him outwardly through improvisational call-and-response, or internally by relating the song's content to his own situation. A stanza in "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder" is exemplary of this point. It reads, "Do you love my Jesus?" and the next stanza inquires, "If you love him, why not serve him?" (qtd. Lovell 214). By "presuming that the listener is a part of the song," the Biblical content of spirituals is connected to both the singers and the audience (Lovell 214).

In addition to providing an inspiring model for freedom, the Biblical subject matter of spirituals also had a subversive function. In a similar manner to the way in which Italians used Nabucco's Biblical content to evade Austrian censorship during the Risorgimento, slaves "drew upon biblical images to mask [... their] yearning for freedom and [...] defiance of tyranny" (Lovell 191). "Oppressed so hard they could not stand," slaves were unable to openly discuss freedom (Marsh 142; Burleigh 21). Therefore, like the Italians, they turned to the Bible, which held a "cachet of untouchability" for their Christian oppressors (Marsh, "Go" 142; Lovell 307; Perris 167). The use of Biblical narratives enabled slaves "to write songs that dealt with every phase of the slave's life and to do so without fear of being punished" (Lovell 193). Like Nabucco's "remote and pious setting," the use of Biblical themes, aspects of nature, such as rivers, and events in

"everyday life," such as death, allowed slaves to speak of subversive themes in a seemingly non-threatening manner (Perris 167).

I have chosen to examine rivers and death as examples of themes of nature and "everyday life" because of the way in which these two symbols are connected in African-American spirituals. As I discussed in Chapter One, in "Va, pensiero," the Hebrew slaves sing of their nostalgic longing for freedom using the River Jordan as a symbol for their homeland: "Del Giordano le rive saluta di Sionne le torri atterrate … Oh, mia patria sì bella e perduta! Oh membranza sì cara e fatal!" [Greet the banks of the Jordan of Zion's towers fallen …Oh, my country so beautiful and lost! Oh, memory so dear and fatal!] (Verdi 390-92). The River Jordan is also evoked in numerous spirituals, examples of which include: "Deep River"; "Roll, Jordan, Roll"; "O, Wasn't Dat a Wide River?"; "I Stood on de Ribber ob Jerdon"; "In the River Jordan"; and "Way Over Jordan." In the Bible, the River Jordan functions as a "dividing line between time and eternity;" in these adaptations, it can be interpreted symbolically as a boundary "between slave land and free land" (Lovell 258). Therefore, crossing the river Jordan represents not only crossing from this world to the next, but from captivity to freedom. For example, the invocation for Jordan to roll in "Roll Jordan Roll," would allow slaves to "walk through on dry ground, as did Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:8) or, more probably [in the symbolic context of African-American spirituals], as did Joshua and the children of Israel when they finally crossed over into the Promised Land to attain freedom (Josh. 3:13-17)" (Dixon 20). The link between crossing the river Jordan into the Promised Land and heaven, supports a symbolic link between death and freedom in many spirituals.

Death is a prominent theme in spirituals, since death and other forms of separation constantly surrounded slaves. On the most basic level, spirituals such as "The Graveyard," "Lay This Body Down," and "Shall I Die" are all expressions of loss that speak of liberation from oppression after death. When spirituals are interpreted on this level, they encourage the believer to leave liberation to God and focus on the achievement of salvation in the afterlife, and thus they were not overtly threatening to slave owners. Instead, the subversive power of these spirituals is evident on a metaphorical level, where they operate as codes for freedom. These codes gave slaves the ability to articulate their longing for liberation in this world. As Lovell notes, "Death and Canaan are most often symbols of release from slavery without meaning release from life" (307). Therefore new meaning is given to the statement from "Sweet Canaan," "Oh, the land I am bound for, Sweet Canaan's happy land I am bound for," just as a new meaning is given to "The Graveyard," which states, "Who gwine to lay dis body, Member, O, shout glory. And-a who gwine to lay dis body, Oh ring Jerusalem. O call all de member to de graveyard," when the listener is aware of the coded meanings of the seemingly innocuous terms that are culled from the Bible and from "everyday life" (Marsh 243; Allen, Ware, and Garrison 15; Lovell 198).

The most overt reference to crossing the river Jordan into the Promised Land is in "Deep River." The lyrics to the song, which contain many of the formal devices I have previously discussed, read: "Deep river, my home is over Jordan, Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into campground. [...] Oh, don't you want to go to that gospel feast, That promis'd land where all is peace?" (Marsh, "Deep" 196-97). Recognizing that the term campground was another name the slaves used for Canaan, the free land, the

meaning behind this song is obvious for anyone in the slave community who had the tools to decode the meanings contained therein (Lovell 306). Lovell contends, for that reason, this spiritual is, "one of the most deadly to the institution of slavery" (Lovell 330). I assert that, because of the way in which it deftly incorporates the structural devices and themes I have discussed thus far, and its association with Harriet Tubman, which I will discuss at length in Section Two, another spiritual that was very "deadly to [... this] institution" in the antebellum period is "Go down, Moses."

Just as the "Milanese could at once identify with the oppressed Jews under the Babylonian rule of Nebuchadnezzar," the African-American slaves could readily identify with the plight of the Jews in Egypt (Southwell-Sanders 24). Thus they looked to the story of Moses for hope, inspiration, and guidance (Lovell 234). In the Old Testament, Moses is the "man chosen by God to lead the Hebrew people out if Egyptian bondage, to preside over the Sinai ceremony constituting those people as the people of God, and lead the Hebrew people to the promised land" (Beegle 909). The story of Moses is found in the Book of Exodus, which is the Old Testament's "second book" and the "second of the five books in the Torah or Pentateuch" (Sarna 689). There are four sections of the Exodus story in which Moses plays a central role: "Israel in Egypt (1:1-12:36)"; "Exodus Events (12:37-15:21)"; "Wilderness Wanderings (15:22-18:27)"; and "Sinai Experiences (19:1-40:300" (Sarna 691). Moses' victory over the Pharaoh, an oppressor of Hebrew slaves, and his escape to freedom in the first three sections of Exodus was a "favorite theme" in spirituals as the numerous adaptations of this story demonstrate (Lovell 320). "Go down, Moses," "Turn Back the Pharaoh's Army," "March On," "When Moses Smote the Water," "Did Not Old Pharaoh Get Lost?," "Brother Moses Gone," and "Come Along,

Moses" are all examples of the spirituals into which the story of Moses was adapted. Although each of these songs incorporated elements of the narrative in a different manner, they share a common set of themes and symbols. Moses is the "symbol of deliverance of a whole people, of true leadership, and of the opportunity for each person to be free" (Lovell 259). He is a "[s]ymbol of oppression overcome and destroyed" (Lovell 259). Egypt, from which Moses liberates the Hebrew slaves, is "the land of slave from which free men emerge; the land leading to the wilderness [...] the country symbolizing the drive for freedom [... and] the land of miraculous deliverance" (Lovell 258). The Pharaoh, like the slave owner, represents "earthly power to the highest degree" (Lovell 243). Although an interesting analysis would result from a comparison of the treatment of Moses in the different spirituals I have listed above, as I noted in the Introduction, my focus will be on the most exemplary of these adaptations, "Go down, Moses."

"Go down, Moses" was the "first spiritual to be published with its music" (Epstein, "Slave" 692-93). This version was entitled, "The Songs of the Contrabands O Let My People Go." words and music obtained through the Rev. L. C. Lockwood, Chaplain to the Contrabands at Fortress Monroe ... (1862)" (Epstein, "Slave" 692-93). While many different versions of "Go down, Moses" can be found in subsequent collections, I have chosen to focus on two that I feel are representative of the differences in meaning that occurred through transcription and arrangement. Since "Go down, Moses" is not included in Slave Songs of the United States, I have chosen an early version of the song from J.B.T. Marsh's The Story of the Jubilee Singers (1881), which I will compare to a later arrangement by H.T. Burleigh (1866-1949) from the second

volume of The Celebrated Negro Spirituals (1919). I have selected March's version of "Go down, Moses" as my primary point of inquiry because of its length and detail, which will provide ample opportunities for analysis, as well as its association with the Fisk Jubilee Singers.[6] The Marsh version of "Go down, Moses" is twenty-five stanzas in length and describes the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt and the process of attaining freedom from bondage. This detailed narrative provides an interesting counterpoint for Burleigh's condensed classical arrangement. As in my analysis of Nabucco, I will begin with an examination of the way in which "the Biblical story [is used] as a basis" of the adaptation process (Lovell 214).

Folk songs use different "meaning components" than opera to construct a narrative (Hirsch 222). As I mentioned in Chapter One, an operatic narrative is created through the incorporation of literary, aural, and visual media (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 9). In a folk song, drama is created through narrative and the interaction of words and music. Since the visual aspect of opera is not present in folk songs, slaves used the description of "Biblical characters and events to dramatize their concepts" (Lovell 111). I have included the complete texts for the Marsh and Burleigh versions of "Go Down, Moses" below.

Go down, Moses (Marsh)

1. When Israel was in Egypt's land:
Let my people go,
Oppress'd so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land,
Tell ole Pharoh, Let me people go.

Go down, Moses (Burleigh)

When Israel was in Egypt's lan'
Let my people go,
Oppress'd so hard they could not stand.
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses,
'Way down in Egypt's lan,'
Tell ole Pharoh,
To let my people go.

[6] The Jubilee Singers were a group of African-Americans, predominantly former slaves, who were the first group to perform spirituals in public in both America and abroad (Lovell 402; Johnson and Johnson 16-17).

2. Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,
Let my people go;
If not I'll smite your first-born dead,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses &c.

3. No more shall they in bondage toil,
Let my people go;
Let them come out with Egypt's spoil,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

4. When Israel out of Egypt came,
Let my people go;
And left the proud oppressive land,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

5. O, 'twas a dark and dismal night,
Let my people go;
When Moses led the Israelites.
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

6. 'Twas good old Moses and Aaron, too,
Let my people go;
'Twas they that led the armies through,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

7. The Lord told Moses what to do,
Let my people go;
To lead the children of Israel through,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

8. O come along, Moses, you'll not get lost,
Let my people go;
Stretch out your rod and come across,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

9. As Israel stood by the water side,
Let my people go;
As the command of God it did divide,
Let my people go.

Thus saith the Lord, bold Moses said,
Let my people go,
If not I'll smite your first born dead,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses,
'Way down in Egypt's land,
Tell ole Pharaoh
To let my people go!
(Burleigh 21-24)

Go down, Moses, &c.

10. When they had reached the other shore,
Let my people go;
They sang a song a triumph o'er.
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

11. Pharaoh said he would no go across.
Let my people go;
But Pharaoh and his host were lost,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

12. O, Moses, the cloud shall cleave the way,
Let my people go;
A fire by night, a shade by day,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

13. You'll not get lost in the wilderness,
Let my people go;
With a lighted candle in your breast,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

14. Jordan shall stand up like a wall,
Let my people go;
With a lighted candle in your breast,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, & c.

15. Your foes shall not before you stand
Let my people go;
And you'll possess fair Canaan's land,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

16. 'Twas just about in harvest time,
Let my people go;
When Joshua led his host divine.
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

17. O let us all from bondage flee,
Let my people go;

And let us all in Christ be free,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

18. We need not always weep and moan,
Let my people go;
And wear these slavery chains forlorn,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

19. This world's a wilderness of woe,
Let my people go;
O, let us on to Canaan go,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

20. What a beautiful morning that will be,
Let my people go;
When time breaks up in eternity.
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

21. O bretheren, bretheren, you'd better be engaged,
Let my people go;
For the devil he's out on a big rampage,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

22. The Devil he thought he had me fast,
Let my people go;
But I thought I'd break his chains at last,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

23. O take yer shoes from off yer feet,
Let my people go;
And walk into the golden street,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

24. I'll tell you what I likes de best,
Let my people go;
It is the shouting Methodist,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.

25. I do believe without a doubt,
Let my people go;
That a Christian has the right to shout,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses, &c.
(Marsh 142-43)

Similarly to Psalm 137 and "Va, pensiero," when the Marsh and Burleigh versions of "Go down, Moses" are placed side by side, the most noticeable difference between them is their length. Despite this sizeable discrepancy, since the first two stanzas of the Marsh version are the same as the two stanzas in the Burleigh version, these stanzas will be analyzed before either version is discussed separately.

The first stanza of both versions of "Go down, Moses" reads: "When Israel was in Egypt's land: / Let my people go, / Oppress'd so hard they could not stand, / Let my people go. / Go down, Moses, / Way down in Egypt land, / Tell ole Pharoh, Let me people go" (Marsh, "Go" 142; Burleigh, "Go" 21-22). The refrain, "Let my people go," which is repeated twice in each stanza, is a direct quotation from Exodus 5:1: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go" (Marsh, "Go" 142; qtd. in Dixon 27). Since these words are spoken by God, for Christians they provide an authoritative Biblical precedent for sanctioning the liberation of God's "people" from bondage (Marsh, "Go" 142). The direct adaptation of events from Exodus is evident in the second stanza as well. In this stanza, the last of the ten plagues is discussed in a line that reads, "If not I'll smite your first-born dead" (Marsh, "Go" 142; Burleigh, "Go" 23). This line refers to the statement in Exodus 4:23: "If thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (qtd. in Dixon 27). It is important to note that the other nine plagues that occur in Exodus are not included in either version (Dixon 27). Although this line provides a powerful threat, the first two stanzas of "Go down, Moses" do not dwell on the

suffering the slaves experienced in captivity (1:18-20) or the plagues God inflicts "upon the oppressors" (7:14-11:10), just as "Va, pensiero" does not focus on the "cry for vengeance" described in the third stanza of Psalm 137 (Psalm 137 C; Dixon 25; Sarna 692). Instead, like "Va, pensiero," they focus on the Hebrew slaves' longing for freedom and, by analogy, the longing for freedom felt by African-American slaves (Lovell 326).

In the first two stanzas of "Go down, Moses," the collective yearning of the Hebrew slaves is expressed in a similar manner both grammatically and musically to "Va, Pensiero." Grammatically, the slave "community" expresses its solidarity through the use of the first person possessive pronoun "my" (Margolin 591). The refrain, "Let my people go" is a notable example of this technique (Marsh 142-43; Burleigh 21-24). As in "Va, pensiero," this pronoun designates a community's "shared sense of identity" in which the individual functions as part of the collective (Margolin 591). In stanza one, "my" refers to all the individuals in the slave community who sing the unison refrain in response to the opening call by a "spokesperson for the group" (Marsh 142; Burleigh 21; Margolin 604). In stanza two the same refrain is preceded by the words, "Thus saith the Lord;" therefore "my" designates God's authority over His people (Marsh 142; Burleigh 21). Another level is added by the clause, "bold Moses said," which follows "Thus saith the Lord" (Marsh 142; Burleigh 21). This stanza is structured so that the words of God are spoken through the prophet Moses – he is a "spokesperson" for God and God's people. According to grammatical structure, the Hebrew slaves, God, Moses, and the contemporary African-Americans are part of the same religious community. To delineate this community from that of the oppressor, first person pronouns are juxtaposed with second person pronouns such as "your" (Margolin 607; Marsh, "Go" 142; Burleigh, "Go"

23). Just as in Psalm 137, this juxtaposition creates a dichotomy between the oppressor and the oppressed – the Pharaoh and the Hebrew slaves in Biblical times and the slave owners and the African-American slaves in nineteenth-century America (Margolin 607).

Burleigh's version of "Go down, Moses" ends after the first two stanzas, while Marsh's version continues with twenty-three additional stanzas. These stanzas provide African-American slaves with a Biblical model for achieving freedom. A line in the eighth stanza, which is spoken by God, is exemplary of this model. It reads, "Oh come along, Moses, you'll not get lost; / Stretch out your rod and come across" (Marsh, "Go" 143). The Biblical account from which this line is adapted reads, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea (Exod. 14:15-16, 21-22)" (qtd. in Dixon 28-29). As with the inclusion of direct quotations from Exodus, the presence of Biblical events, such as the parting of the Red Sea, provided slaves with an example of divine authority and justice, as well as a religious precedent for the abolition of slavery. In addition, references to these events enabled slaves to use the code words that I previously discussed. For example, stanza 14 reads, "Jordan shall stand up like a wall" (cf. Josh. 3:15-17), stanza 15 reads "And you'll possess fair Canaan's land," and stanza 19 reads, "o, let us on to Canaan go" (Dixon 29). The subversive connotations of these code words connect Biblical events to the present on a metaphorical level.

References to Christianity also connect the past and present in a more explicit manner. The presence of the devil, a "figure [that …] plays no role whatever in the

Exodus story," frames the Old Testament within the context of the New Testament. The devil is referred to in stanza twenty-one, "For the devil he's out on a big rampage," and stanza twenty-two, "The devil thought he had me fast;" the "figure of the devil plays no role whatever in the Exodus story" (Marsh, "Go" 143; Dixon 30). References to aspects of the religious climate of nineteenth-century America also strengthen this connection. Stanza twenty-four describes "the shouting Methodist"; "[a]ntebellum Southern blacks were, like antebellum Southern whites, most often Baptists and Methodists" (Marsh, "Go" 143; Kolchin 145). Another important contemporary reference occurs in stanza twenty-five, which reads "a Christian has a right to shout" (Marsh, "Go" 143). As I have previously discussed, the "ring shout (or simply shout)" was an "African-derived dance" that often accompanied the "[p]erformance of spirituals" (Stewart 22). These references create an unbroken chain from the Hebrew slaves in Egypt to the African-American slaves in nineteenth-century America. As Uri Margolin contends in "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology," "Members of a community often possess a historical or transgenerational sense and feel an obligation to preserve and continue the heritage of previous generations, since they regard the past as a significant or even decisive part of what constitutes their own shared social identity" (607). By forging a "transgenerational sense" of community, "Go down, Moses" gave African-American slaves hope that just as God liberated his "people" from slavery in Egypt in approximately 1300 B.C.E., he would also liberate His "people" from bondage in nineteenth-century America (Marsh, "Go" 142; Dixon 27; Anderson 6). Like a sermon, this version of "Go down, Moses" "mediat[es] between ancient history and contemporary reality [, …] the Christian truth

claim and current views [, and …] the generality of Christian doctrine and the individuality of the listener" (Beutel 45-50).

Later versions of "Go down, Moses," which adhered to classical performance conventions, were much shorter than Marsh's. Due to this reduction in length, like "Va, pensiero," Burleigh's version of this song comments on slavery in America by analogy, since it does not include a direct connection between the Biblical past and the present. Burleigh, "an eminent coloured musician and composer," was "a pioneer in making arrangements for the Spirituals that widened their appeal and extended their use to singers and the general musical public" (Johnson and Johnson, Preface 48). The version of "Go down, Moses" included in The Celebrated Negro Spirituals, demonstrates the transformation that spirituals underwent when they were adapted into the classical tradition. Burleigh, who worked with Dvořák, arranged spirituals so that they could be performed in classical concert setting by "singers and music lovers" (Lovell 442). As I previously noted, Burleigh's version of "Go down, Moses" is only two stanzas in length. Notably, unlike Marsh's version, it cites "Exodus VIII" as its "source" for audiences who are unfamiliar with the Old Testament (Burleigh, "Go" 21). The juxtaposition of the Marsh's and Burleigh's versions, which is representative of versions found in later collections such as James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson's The Books of American Negro Spirituals (1954), affirms a claim made by Christa K. Dixon in Negro Spirituals: From Bible to Folk Song. Dixon contends:

> Modern song books are primarily interested in short, singable songs. As a result, older songs – which were often long and involved *sermons* [italics mine] – appear with only a select few of their more popular stanzas intact.

> The truncation obviously gives a distorted image of the song's original meaning and function. "Go Down, Moses," for example, has recently become a chorus of liberation involving only one or two stanzas of more or less related wandering couplets, whereas at one time it was a long narrative song. The Jubilee Singers recorded twenty-five stanzas. (25-26)

While I have previously discussed the "distorted image" that omitting twenty-three stanzas would have on the "meaning" of the narrative, I will now assess the effect its transformation into a "short, singable" song had on its role as a performance text.

Marsh's transcription of "Go down, Moses" is musically simplistic compared to Burleigh's arrangement. Consistent with modes of oral transmission, the only harmonic texture that the arranger provides is a line of octaves, with a simple harmony on the refrain where singers could divide into parts. Burleigh's arrangement erases any memory of the original call-and-response pattern of spirituals by presenting a monophonic vocal line for a solo singer. It also negates the possibility of improvisation by using piano accompaniment throughout, including a three and a half bar introduction and interlude, as well as tempo and dynamic markings. To enable me to evaluate the cultural implications of the elements of folk music that classical arrangements like Burleigh's have excluded, I will now turn my attention to the way in which "Go down, Moses" operated as a subversive "code song" in antebellum America (Dixon 23).

Section Two: The Audience

In the Introduction, I alluded to the fact that the history of American slavery is divided into "two broad chronological periods:" the colonial period, which encompasses slavery from its origins until circa 1770; and the antebellum period, which extends from circa 1800, the gap accounted for by the period in which the American Revolution took place, until the abolition of slavery in 1860 (Kolchin 28). Although it was during the colonial period that slavery became a "mainstream" part of America's social and economic fabric, my focus will be on the antebellum period in which the geographical and conceptual boundary between oppression and freedom became increasingly apparent in America (Kolchin 29). During the antebellum period, "American slavery underwent massive expansion," reaching an estimated total of 3, 953, 760 slaves by 1860 (Kolchin 93). This population increase resulted in an "expansion" of slavery that spread from the seaboard colonies to which it had been confined prior to 1860, to nine new states that "reached more that halfway across the American continent" (Kolchin 93). During this period, America was also divided between the South, in which a "true slave society" existed, and the North, in which slavery had become increasingly "marginal" over time (Kolchin 29). It is the oppressive apparatuses of the South and the freedom represented by the North that informed the coded meaning of many spirituals such as "Go down, Moses."

The oppressive apparatuses in antebellum America were based on race. "Racial distinction facilitated enslavement" by creating a visible boundary between the dominant and subservient groups in American society. Unlike white servants who could often escape the hierarchy into which they were stationed, slaves were always distinguishable

because of their skin colour, a delineation that was further exacerbated by the "brandings and mutilations" that visibly and irrevocably marked slaves as human property (Kolchin 13). To guard their property, in addition to holding them in physical restraints, slave owners placed slaves in "psychological shackle[s]" (Thurman 40). These "shackles" were intended to "undercut slave autonomy" and took the form of the arbitrary separation of families to the suppression of "religious activities," which I will discuss at length later in this section (Kolchin 119, 118). They also took the form of surveillance and the imposition of rigid rules, including "when to rise in the morning, [...] go to the fields, [...] break for meals, [... and] when to go to bed" (Kolchin 118). As I noted in Chapter One, it is the structures of "everyday life" that constitute popular culture. Just as slave owners used these structures as mechanisms of oppression, like Italian opera audiences, slaves used them as "a site of struggle" (Fiske 20). For example, slaves participated in "silent sabotage," which was a form of "day-to-day resistance" that

> without threatening the security of the slave regime, caused considerable aggravation to individual slave owners. Throughout the South, slaves dragged their feet, pretended to misunderstand orders, feigned illness, 'accidentally' broke agricultural implements, and stole coveted items (especially food) from their owners, viewing such appropriation as 'taking' what rightfully belonged to them. (Kolchin 157)

Physical forms of daily resistance were supplemented by forms of symbolic resistance, such as folk tales and folk songs. Notably, the narrative elements in each of these folk genres "served the same function" (Marszalek 638). As John F. Marszalek discusses in his entry on "Slave Resistance" in the Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery:

> Slaves told stories with clear African origins about weak humans or animals who, through native cunning, often outsmarted their more powerful adversaries. Brer Rabbit and a slave named Old John were the major folk heroes who entertained and encouraged the slaves. Listening to those stories, slaves gained a fictional victory denied them in real life. Brer Rabbit repeatedly made the seemingly more powerful Brer Fox and Brer Bear look foolish. Stories of his activities encouraged the slaves to believe that their own resistance might not always be fruitless. (638)

The "fictional victory" to which Marszalek refers was part of the "triumphant ideology" of the Biblical exile narratives used in spirituals. In this guise of folk idioms, slaves could speak freely of "direct challenges" to the institution of slavery (Kolchin 157). To comprehensively evaluate the way in which the Biblical content of "Go down, Moses" enabled slaves to resist their physical and "psychological shackle[s]," I will now turn my attention to the role of religion in antebellum society.

Just as the institution of slavery transformed over time, so too did the relationship of slaves to Christianity. When African slaves arrived in America, they carried with them varied traditional religious beliefs that represented the different African societies from which they had been taken (Scherer 628). Although Christianity could not provide a replacement for the African religious traditions of which slaves were stripped, it could provide them with a foundation story for their new life in America and, since they were a heterogeneous group, a common frame of reference (Scherer 626). It is important to note that the aspects of Christianity I have just discussed were indicative of the antebellum period. In the colonial period, "both blacks and whites resisted the efforts of a few

missionaries to convert 'pagans'" (Kolchin 54). Slaves feared that they would lose a connection to their roots if they adopted their master's religion, while many slave owners feared that "conversion might require [...] emancipation" if one Christian could not hold another in bondage (Kolchin 54). This attitude was transformed during "the Great Awakening of the late 1730s and early 1740s" (Kolchin 55). The "Great Awakening" was the first of a series of religious revivals [... that] swept across America" (Kolchin 55). This Evangelical movement "actively sought out black as well as white converts and accepted them as spiritual equals" in religious gatherings such as camp meetings (Kolchin 55; Scherer 630).

The kind of equality present in camp meetings was notably absent from American society in other spaces designated for Christian worship. For example, in urban settings slaves were often allowed to attend church, but they were seated away from the white congregation in partitioned galleries. Like Italian opera houses, churches enforced social hierarchy. In rural settings, a plantation master decided what forms of worship he deemed appropriate on his property. The spectrum of opportunities for worship ranged from no religious participation to praise-houses built specifically for slaves (Epstein, Sinful 200). As these options demonstrate, African-American slaves were often forced to worship in segregated or supervised sacred spaces. Camp meetings provided an opportunity for more individualized devotion. In the South, camp meetings were traditionally "held for several days after the harvest" at a "designated 'campground,'" like the one referred to in "Deep River" (Dixon 91). At camp meetings, "blacks and whites worshipped and sang together" in a call-and-response style that was similar to spirituals (Epstein, Sinful 199). Even "black preachers were sometimes active on these occasions," allowing slaves to be led in

prayer by members of their own community (Scherer 630). Camp meetings led to the creation of "the invisible church" in which slaves "assembled in the quarters, in open air 'hush arbors' to have "secret contraband prayer meetings" where they could worship completely unsupervised (Kolchin 143; Lovell 183). In the services black preachers, who were "often illiterate" and thus "ignorant of the fine points of theology," stressed aspects of Biblical narratives that applied to bondage experienced by their congregation (Kolchin 144). The story of Moses and the Exodus is a notable example of one of these narratives (Kolchin 144). In a story from The Independent from 1862, reprinted in the National Anti-Slavery Standard,[7] correspondent Elias Smith stated:

> I witnessed … at Hatteras … a party of forty-two men, women and children arrived from South Creek on Pamilco River. After finding themselves really among friends, they joined in singing some of their simple chants and hymns; and when the party were being transferred to the shore, one of the women, with an infant at her breast, broke forth in exclamations of praise and thanksgiving to God, which in its simple pathos reminded me of the song of Miriam celebrating the deliverance of the children of Israel on the banks of the Red Sea. They walked in slow and solemn procession to Fort Clark, chanting as they went: 'Oh! Ain't I glad to get out de wilderness.' (Qtd. in Epstein, Sinful 259)

Since the story of Moses performed an important function in the African-American religious community, it is logical that it would also play an important role in spirituals.

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[7] Both The Independent and the Anti-Slavery Standard are examples of "newspapers, periodicals, and publications" cited by Dena Epstein in Sinful Tunes and Spirituals that describe the "former slaves" in Port Royal (256).

Folk songs are "product[s] of a folk community," and thus they explore the "themes and subject matter" important to that community, even when they "run counter to established law and custom" of the dominant group (Lovell 129). Like opera, a folk song is a performance and a "musical performance [can function as] a ritual in which the identity and values of the members of a social group are explored, affirmed and celebrated" (Small 81). Spirituals fulfilled this function for the slave community. As is evident in Smith's correspondence, Biblical themes resonated in the lives of slaves and provided a point of reference for their experiences. Lovell identifies seven social functions spirituals fulfilled in the African-American community, most of which I have previously alluded to or discussed. They are:

1. To give the community a true, valid, and useful song
2. To keep the community invigorated
3. To inspire the uninspired individual
4. To enable the group to face its problems
5. To comment on the slave situation
6. To stir each member to personal solutions and to a sense of belonging in the midst of a confusing and terrifying world
7. To provide a code language for emergency (Lovell 198)

While each of these elements is important to creating a sense of identity, it is number seven that is of the greatest interest in the second section of this chapter. To further explore this element, I will discuss the way in which the "code language" in "Go down, Moses" allowed slaves and transform their religious identification with Moses into action.

The "code[d] language" of spirituals was of particular importance on the Underground Railroad, a "loosely organized system [that] provided aid in the form of shelter and transportation to fugitive slaves travelling [from the South] through Northern states, usually on their way to Canada" (Gara 747). The act of running away, or "inducing others to run away" was "revolutionary" for a slave; it violated property laws and undermined the "economic and political" structure of the South (Lovell 227). Therefore, the mechanisms of the Underground Railroad had to be carefully safeguarded. Spirituals provided slaves with a "code language" to talk about the Railroad. This is exemplified in two well-known spirituals: "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "The Gospel Train."

"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" is "a spiritual classic," that can be interpreted as a singer's request to journey on "the Underground Railway" (Lovell 247). Just like "Deep River," this spiritual incorporates Biblical themes with those of nature and death. The opening line of the song, "Swing low, sweet chariot, Comin' for to carry me home," refers to "two biblical episodes" (Dixon 19). In the first of these, the Old Testament prophet Elijah, when walking with Elisha by the Jordan River, encounters "a chariot of fire, and horses of fire" that carry him to heaven (2 Kings 2:11)" (Dixon 19). The second episode appears in the New Testament; "Jesus told a parable about a rich man whom tradition calls Dives – the Latin adjective for rich – and a poor beggar, Lazarus, who died 'and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom' (Luke 16:22)" (Dixon 19). The line in the song, "I look'd over Jordan and what did I see, Comin' for to carry me home, A band of angels comin' after me," incorporates aspects of both of these episodes as well as the symbol of the River Jordan (Marsh, "Swing" 126). The journey of going home to heaven in a chariot, conjures the coded meaning of both death and freedom (Dixon 20).

"The Gospel Train" is another notable example of the spiritual that discusses a mode of transportation to the Promised Land, although the image of a train is much more explicit on the Underground Railroad than that of a chariot. Although the "railroad did not come into America until the late 1820s[] [and] it did not reach the slave country to any great extent until the 1830s and 1840s," trains were an important symbol in many spirituals (Lovell 249). Trains represented an "implicit democracy" as verse six of "The Gospel Train" demonstrates: "The fare is cheap and all can go, The rich and poor are there, No second-class on board the train, No difference in the fare" (Lovell 249; Marsh, "Gospel" 150). This democratic acceptance is also enforced by the presence of Biblical figures who, in the song, accompany the passengers on their journey (Lovell 255). Verse seven states, "There's Moses, Noah, and Abraham, And all the prophets, too, Our friends in Christ are all on board, O, what a heavenly crew" (Marsh, "Gospel" 150). I have previously discussed the significance of the Old Testament figures in this list.

The process of travelling on the Underground Railroad was not as simple as "The Gospel Train" implies. In antebellum America, the "vast majority of fugitives were temporary runaways;" "long-term survival on the loose was relatively rare in the antebellum South: the increasing density of settlement, improved communication, and the local hegemony of resident masters facilitated the capture of fugitives" (Kolchin 158). Therefore, experienced conductors such as Harriet Tubman, who purportedly "never lost a passenger and [...] was never caught," were especially valued (Eggleston 121). Tubman's association with "Go down, Moses" made this spiritual exemplary of the coded songs used on the Underground Railroad.

Tubman (ca. 1820-1913) was born in Dorchester, Maryland, the granddaughter of slaves who had been brought to America from Africa (Sterling 744; Eggleston 121). She became a slave at the age of five or six when she "was hired out as a baby nurse" (Sterling 744). In 1849, after "learning that she and her brothers were to be sold," Tubman ran away to Pennsylvania where she could be free (Sterling 744). There, she worked as a domestic to pay for her "periodic trips to the South to rescue family and friends" (Sterling 744). Between 1849 and 1861, Tubman had set up and was operating a line on the Underground Railroad. This line consisted of a network of safe houses where runaway slaves could hide during the day and a safe route they could travel at night that "extended from the Deep South to Canada" (Eggleston 121). It is estimated that in total, Tubman "made nineteen trips, freeing [...] more than three hundred slaves" (Sterling 744). This successful record of going *down*, like in "Go *down*, Moses," [italics mine] into the south of slavery and "leading her people to freedom" earned Tubman the nickname Moses (Eggleston 122). As I discussed in the Introduction, this association meant that "Go down, Moses" was "often ascribed to [...] Tubman" (Dixon 24).

Not only did Tubman earn the nickname Moses, but she also used "Go down, Moses" as a code on the Underground Railroad. Lovell describes Tubman as an "incomparably fearless and brave Pied Piper [that] kept marching [... slaves] along to the tune of 'Old Chariot,' 'Go down, Moses,' 'Steal Away,' 'The Gospel Train is Coming,' 'There's No Rain to Wet You,' and 'Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel?'" (125). He notes that "Russell Ames and others have recorded how Harriet Tubman used 'Go Down, Moses' to call up her candidates for transportation to free land" (Lovell 196). In her biography of Tubman entitled Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman (1869), Sarah

Bradford describes a scene in which Tubman used a spiritual containing the story of Moses as "a code language for emergency." Bradford writes:

> At one time she left her party in the woods, and went by a long roundabout way to one of the 'stations of the Underground Railway,' as she called them. Here she procured food for her famished party, often paying out of her hardly-gained earnings, five dollars a day for food for them. But she dared not go back till night, for fear of being watched, and thus revealing their hiding-place. After nightfall, the sound of a hymn sung at a distance comes up upon the ears of the concealed and famished fugitives in the woods, and they know that their deliverer is at hand. They listen eagerly for the words she sings, for by them they are warned of danger, or informed of safety. Nearer and nearer comes the unseen singer and the words wafted to their ears. [...] I give these words exactly as Harriet sang them to me to a sweet and simple Methodist air. 'The first time I go by singing this hymn, they don't come out to me,' she said, 'till I listen if the coast is clear; then when I go back and sing it again, they come out. But if I sing: / Moses go down in Egypt / Tell old Pharaoh let me go; / Hadn't been for Adam's fall, / Shouldn't have to died at all. / Then they don't come out, for there's danger in the way. (Qtd. in Humez 234-35)

The importance of the story of Moses on Tubman's passage through the wilderness was enforced by the parallels she cultivated between her life story and that of Moses.

Like Verdi, Tubman created an image that influenced the way in which "Go down, Moses" was received and interpreted. For example, to foster her association with

this Biblical figure, Tubman "closely patterned" her call to God "on the Old Testament story of the Lord's call to Moses to take up the mantle of leadership" found in Exodus 2:23-3:22 (Humez 152). Rosa Belle Holt describes this pattern in an article entitled "A Heroine in Ebony" published in the Chatuaquan in July 1886. Holt writes:

> 'She [Harriet Tubman] said: 'Long ago when the Lord told me to go free my people I said, 'No Lord! I can't go – don't ask me.' But he came another time. I saw him just as plain. Then I said again, 'Lord, go away – get some better educated person – get a person with more culture than I have; go away, Lord.' But he came back a third time, and speaks to me just as he did to Moses, and he says, 'Harriet, I wants you.' And I knew then I must do what he bid me. Now do you suppose he wanted me to do this just for a day, or a week? No! The Lord told me to take care of my people meant me to do it as long as I live, and so I do what he told me to.' (Qtd. in Humez 151-52)

In comparison, Moses' discussion with God reads (Exod. 3:9-312):

> "And now, behold the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" He said, "But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain."

By modeling her own life story after that of Moses, Tubman was able to affect her public image and represent herself as a "spokesperson" for the African-American community. For example, the passengers she transported to freedom also believed that, like Moses, Tubman had a special blessing from God. In an article called "Moses from the Rising Sun: The Antecedents and Advancements of the Coloured Race" (1874), William Wells Brown wrote of an encounter he had in Canada in 1860 with one of these freed slaves. He states, "Of one man we inquired, "Were you not afraid of being caught?" "Oh, no" said he, "Moses has got the charm." "What do you mean?" we asked. He replied, "The whites can't catch Moses, [be]cause she's born with the charm. The Lord has given Moses the power" (qtd. in Humez 259). The reception of songs such as "Go down, Moses" in post-Civil War America would have been influenced by the way in which Tubman associated herself with Moses' life story.

The image Tubman cultivated extended far beyond the abolition of the system of oppression against which she fought. During the Civil War, the Union Army recruited Tubman so that she could share with them her "extensive knowledge about the geography and many routes in and out of Confederate territory" (Eggleston 122). After the war, "she supported her parents and other freed people, converting her residence" in Auburn, New York, "into a Home for Indigent and Aged Negroes" and also founded the National Association of Coloured Women (Sterling 744). As Larry Gara contends, "The legend of the underground railroad took hold of the American psyche in [... these] post-Civil War years" to the extent that, by the time of her death, like Verdi, Tubman's image had become her legacy (749). When she died in 1913, at the age of 92, Tubman was "given a military funeral with honors" (Eggleston 124; Gara 749).

When critically assessing Tubman's legacy as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, it is important to consider a claim made by Gara in his entry on the "Underground Railroad" in the Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery that the "legend of the underground railroad was based [only] partly on fact" (747). Gara states:

> [U]nderground railroad activity formed the basis for a popular postwar legend replete with stories of exciting adventure, secret hiding places, and a special railroad nomenclature, including references to underground railroad 'stations,' 'trainsmen,' and the 'president of the line.' [...] The legend resulted from exaggerated views of a busy operation and from inflated estimates of the actual number of escaped slaves. (747)

As with the case of "Va, pensiero," while the associations between Tubman and the story of Moses may have to some extent been "constructed retrospectively," this does not diminish their impact on the psyche of a marginalized group in search of a foundational story (Smart, "Verdi" 33). Like the role of Verdi's aria in Italy's national mythology, Tubman's associations with Moses and her role as a "spokesperson" for the African-American community in the mythology of pre-Civil War America have affected the reception and interpretation of "Go down, Moses" by audiences and scholars.

Section Three: The Critic

Similarly to that of opera, the role of spirituals has shifted considerably since the nineteenth century when spirituals performed an important role in the African-American slave community. Following the Unification of Italy, the political and social conditions that produced Nabucco were no longer accessible to operatic audiences, just as after the abolition of slavery, the conditions that produced spirituals were no longer accessible to

audiences. As a result, the audience to which this genre catered changed dramatically. The "Jubilee Singers of Fisk University first introduced the Spirituals to the public" after the Civil War by touring both America and Europe (Johnson and Johnson, Preface 16). The "internationally famous [African-American] contralto" Marion Anderson regularly "included spirituals in her programs" as did Paul Robeson, the famous African-American singer whose "father traveled on the Underground Railroad from slavery to freedom" (Lovell 440, 441). Other notable performers who have included spirituals is their repertoire are "Mahalia Jackson, [...] Leontyne Price, Jessye Norman, Kathleen Battle, [...], and Barbara Hendricks" (Stewart 34). As the careers of these singers, and the popularity of transcriptions by popular composers such as Burleigh, "who is credited with having done more than anyone else in preparing [...] spirituals for [...] concert singers," demonstrate how, following the abolishment of slavery, spirituals moved into the concert setting (Lovell 442).

Contemporary performances of spirituals are now usually performed in concert settings by classically trained vocalists. Just as the advent of television and recording technology has changed operatic reception and interpretation, this has also diminished the communal significance of listening to spirituals. Recorded versions of spirituals have also eliminated the opportunity for improvisation; like a transcription, once a spiritual is recorded it is frozen in space and time. Barbara Hendrick's Negro Spirituals (1983) and Kathleen Battle's Pleasures of Their Company (1986) are notable examples of recordings on which African-American opera singers perform spirituals. June Tabor, a white folksinger who recorded an *a capella* version of "Lay This Body Down" on Abyssinians (1991), crossed racial boundaries while bringing spirituals back into the domain of

popular music. These performance practices blurred the divisions between races and classical and folk traditions; however, other African-American musical traditions have preserved the subversive aspects of spirituals.

Jazz, blues, and gospel music all contain musical elements that can be traced to spirituals (Lovell 461, 463, 467). An important example of an element of spirituals that is found in both blues and gospel is the call-and-response pattern, which is exemplified in the beginning of James Brown's song "Say It Loud, I'm Black and Proud" (1968) (Stewart 37, 256). The subversive quality of singing spirituals was used in the racial struggles of the 1960s. As Kerran L. Sanger notes in "When the Spirit Sings!" The Role of Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement, just as singing had provided slaves with a form of protest in the antebellum period, singing was "perhaps the most powerful rhetorical behavior of the civil rights movement" (15). Even the content of spirituals resonated in this period. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated that "one could not help but be moved by these traditional songs, which brought to mind the long history of the Negro's suffering'" (qtd. in Sanger 31). This statement is exemplified in King's speeches, into which he incorporated the Biblical imagery that I have previously discussed. Evidence of this can be found in the title of his final speech "I See the Promised Land" (1968) (King 193). King also incorporated inspirational lines from spirituals into his speeches to situate contemporary racial injustices within a historical context. In the final line of his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" (1963), King refers directly to the call for freedom articulated in spirituals:

> And when we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and hamlet, from every state and city, we will be able to speed up

> that day when all of God's children – black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants – will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, free at last; thank God Almighty, we are free at last." (105-06)

As this legacy of spirituals in American history demonstrates, just as opera is in a "meditative period" that provides critics with new perspectives on a "musico-literary" genre, a "historical reading" of spirituals is equally as fruitful (Clement 19). While spirituals were unjustly ignored until the second half of the twentieth century, after the Civil Rights movement in America, explorations of the slave experience became a legitimate aspect in academia (Kolchin 134). In this context, slaves are considered as "subjects in their own right rather than merely as objects of white action" (Kolchin 133). Historians and critics have explored the "'internal' lives [of slaves], including their families, religion, social organization, folkways, values, and resistance to oppression" (Kolchin 134). My investigation of spirituals contributes to this new perspective. It acknowledges that since slaves "were [predominantly] illiterate and" were unable to leave many "written records," forms of texts, such as folk songs, which do not fall into the "purview" of traditional canonical literary studies require evaluation from new critical perspectives (Kolchin 134; Groos 10). By challenging the academic categories into which spirituals have traditionally been situated and the mediated form in which they have been preserved, I have evaluated the limitations of traditional modes of interpretation that have influenced academic understandings of folk songs.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for the necessity of reading "beyond the words on the printed page" to reveal the "web of affiliation" that influences the composition, reception, and interpretation of a popular performance text (Trowell 1193; Said, Culture 125). The "approach to [...] music making" that I explored allowed me to build a "bridge" between the categories of "high culture," exemplified by classical music, and products of "daily life," such as spirituals (Small 13-14; Davis 219-20). In Chapters One and Two, by juxtaposing Verdi's Nabucco and "Go down, Moses" I have crossed borders between cultures and time periods, blurred national, racial, and linguistic boundaries, and challenged traditional categories of "thought and experience" (Said, "Reflections" 185), the significance of which I will explore in the Conclusion.

Conclusion

Point, Counterpoint: Borders Re-Drawn

A comparative framework creates a polyphonic texture by simultaneously combining two or more texts or voices (Machlis and Forney 21). In the previous chapters, I compared texts from two "musico-literary" genres, opera and African-American spirituals, using three perspectives: the composer (poetic); the audience (historically-situated reception); and the critic (academic) (Scher 242; Trowell 1194). In the concluding chapter of my investigation, I will weave these perspectives together, "*punctus contra punctum*," or "point against point," to assess the way in which a comparative investigation cultivates a "plurality of vision" that crosses boundaries and challenges categories of "thought and experience" (Machlis and Forney 21; Said, "Reflections" 186, 185).

Section One: The Composer

In Section One: The Composer, I compared the adaptation of Old Testament exile narratives into a popular "musico-literary" text in both the classical and folk traditions (Wolf 254). Since "musical-literary" texts are inherently contrapuntal, in this section I investigated how each part, or voice, in this "hybrid" genre retains independence, yet also functions as part of the work as the whole (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 9). By examining issues of intertextuality and intermediality, I explored how the combination of literary and musical elements creates a "plurimedial" text that requires an interdisciplinary mode of analysis (Wolf 254)

I chose to focus my examination on transition periods in the history of opera and African-American spirituals, so that I could highlight the historically changing

relationship between words and music in each of these genres. In Chapter One I explored opera, a classical art form with a formalized composition process. Since "the text" of opera was "the master of the music" for the "first two centuries of the genre's existence," I used the libretto as a literary point of entry into my investigation (Monteverdi qtd. in Machlis and Forney 366; Trowell 1193). My research focussed on nineteenth-century Italy, where the traditional relationship between words and music became inverted when composers such as Giuseppe Verdi assumed the role of "musical dramatists" (Della Seta 69). By tracing the influence of "pre-existing" literary and musical "works" on Nabucco's form and content, I evaluated the changing relationship between words and music at this point in operatic history in the genre's country of origin (Groos 10; Sadie, History 1). Through an analysis of the relationship between form and content in "Va, pensiero," I attempted to demonstrate how the musical and literary aspects of opera worked in tandem to foster a community's "shared sense of identity" (Margolin 591).

In Chapter Two, I explored the way in which spirituals, which are categorized by the Western musical tradition as "folk songs," evolved from the "everyday life" of nineteenth-century African-American slaves (Lovell xiii; Fiske 32). The often "illiterate" composers of spirituals used improvisational compositional techniques and combined elements of "African musical expression" with a foundational Christian religious narrative (Kolchin 134; Lovell 88; Kolchin 41). The "hybrid" nature of spirituals reflected the "hybrid" identity of the African-American community (Hutcheon and Hutcheon, Opera 9). As with opera, the traditional relationship between words and music in African-American spirituals became inverted in the nineteenth century when white collectors transcribed spirituals into a printed form. My comparison of two versions of

"Go down, Moses" illustrated how the form and content of spirituals were altered further when they were adapted into the classical tradition.

In Section One, by comparing two adaptations with the same canonical "source," I explored the way in which "intermedial transposition" transcends disciplinary boundaries and allows critics "to see (or hear) beyond the words on the printed page" (Wolf 254; Trowell 1193).

Section Two: The Audience

In Section One, I built a "bridge" between "source" texts and adaptations by examining the relationship between words and music in the intermedial adaptation process. In turn, in Section Two: The Audience, I built a "bridge" between "high culture and daily life" by exploring the way in which the act of performance mediates between the text and the audience (Davis 219-20). Since vocalization is "an act, process, or instance of vocalizing" in which a performer "gives voice to" a printed text, my research in this section examined the way in which a performance brings the words off the page and into a wider social context ("Vocalization" 1301).

To allow me to evaluate the way in which societal power structures influence historically-situated reception, I selected adaptations that occurred in the same time period. Notably, the first formal opera, Claudio Monteverdi's Orfeo, premiered in 1607, while the first ships bringing African slaves to America landed in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 (Sadie, History 17; Kolchin 3). Although these two events took place on different continents and in very different historical contexts, each introduced the conditions necessary for the emergence of opera and African-American spirituals. By comparing these genres within a similar time frame, from the early seventeenth century to 1861, the

date of the creation of the Kingdom of Italy and the start of the American Civil War, with a focus on the nineteenth century, I explored the way in which two oppressed groups experienced exile.

Each of the Old Testament narratives I examined, the Babylonian captivity under Nebuchadnezzar and the Exodus from Egypt led by Moses, are Biblical models of exile, captivity, and freedom. In both the Risorgimento and the antebellum period, Italians and African-American slaves used these narratives as an analogy for their experiences of exile. The Biblical content of Nabucco and African-American spirituals subverted the censorship of Austrian authorities and slave-owners and allowed these oppressed groups to have a political voice.

In Section Two, my examination of the subversive significance of "Va, pensiero" and "Go down, Moses" was supported by the association of these "musico-literary" texts with historical figures that were regarded as "spokes[people]" for their communities – Giuseppe Verdi and Harriet Tubman (Margolin 504). In Chapter One I examined the way in which Italian audiences, who identified with the Hebrew slaves longing for their homeland in Verdi's "quintessential Risorgimento opera," moved Nabucco from hierarchical opera houses onto the streets (Kimbell 449). In Chapter Two, I explored how Tubman's association with Moses and his life story as a result of her work on the Underground Railroad solidified the link between Biblical and contemporary events. My evaluation of the "historiographic fantasy" that resulted from the "retrospective mythologization" of Nabucco and "Go down, Moses" revealed how adaptations of Old Testament exile narratives were part of the foundation stories of Italians and African-Americans in the nineteenth century (Smart, "Verdi" 37).

Section Three: The Critic

In Sections One and Two, I cultivated a "plurality of vision" by exploring the way in which my comparative examination transcends boundaries, challenges barriers, and breaks down borders. In Section One, I attempted to demonstrate how the intermedial adaptation process transcends medial and disciplinary boundaries between literature and music, academic boundaries between canonical and popular texts, religious boundaries between the sacred and the secular, linguistic boundaries between Italian and English, and temporal boundaries between ancient and contemporary texts. In Section Two, my analysis of the way in which Old Testament exile narratives were interpreted in two different contexts crossed cultural borders between Italy and America, geographical borders between Africa and America, national borders between Italy and Austria, and racial borders between African-American slaves and white slave owners. Therefore, in these two sections, I affirmed Werner Wolf's assertion that "Intermediality is in fact an important notion for the comparison and analysis of the arts and media as well as their cultural contexts, both from a systematic and a historical perspective" (256).

Since opera and African-American spirituals are "exhausted on the level of creation" and the historical conditions in which they were created and performed no longer exist, in Section Three: The Critic, I self-reflexively examined how these "systematic and historical perspectives[s]" enable critics to explore musico-literary texts in a contemporary context. In this section, I showed how my methodology presents a model for further interdisciplinary research into "musico-literary" texts and raises theoretical questions that reveal the importance of developing a semiotics of vocal music. By exploring musico-literary texts from the perspective of the libretto's three addressees

– the composer, the audience, and the critic – this model combines elements of literary and musical studies to create a "bridge" between these disciplines.

Conclusion

As Antonín Dvořák stated in reference to the study of African-American spirituals in the nineteenth century, just because "no one has arisen to make the most of [… them] does not prove that nothing is there" (qtd. in Lovell 10). My thesis reveals that the same is true of musico-literary texts. It is my hope that as the study of these texts continues to take root in contemporary academic institutions, critics will look beyond disciplinary boundaries and contribute their voices to this burgeoning "field of comparative inquiry" (Scher 242).

Appendix A

Cast of Characters

Nabucodonosor	King of Babylon	Baritone
Ismaele	Nephew of Sedecia, King of Jerusalem	Tenor
Zaccaria	High Priest of the Hebrews	Bass
Abigaille	Slave, presumed to be the first daughter Of Nabuchodonosor	Soprano
Fenena	Daughter of Nabuchodonosor	Soprano
The High Priest of Baal		Bass
Abdallo	Elderly Officer of the King of Babylon	Tenor
Anna	Zaccaria's Sister	Soprano

Babylonian and Hebrew soldiers, Levites, Hebrew virgins, Babylonian women, magi, Lords of the Kingdom of Babylon, populace etc.

Setting: Jerusalem and Babylon, 587 BC (Sadie, Verdi 41)

Synopsis

Part 1: 'Jerusalem'

Inside the temple of Solomon

The Babylonian army has reached Jerusalem and is at the gates of the temple. The Israelites lament their fate, but the prophet Zaccaria rallies them: he has a hostage Fenena, daughter of Nabucco, the Babylonian king, and God will assist them. The people follow Zaccaria into battle. The two numbers that encompass this action are linked and in many ways comprise a single unit. The opening chorus, 'Gli arredi festivi', is fashioned on a large scale and draws its effect from a juxtaposition of contrasting blocks: a terrified populace, a group of praying Levites, another of supplicant virgins. Zaccaria's response is set in the usual cavatina form of a double aria. The Andante, 'D'Egitto la sui lidi', has an unusual two-stanza structure in which the opening of the second stanza is sustained by unison chorus. The cabaletta, 'Come notte al sol fulgente', also features a unison choral interruption.

The stage clears, leaving Fenena and Ismaele alone. We learn in recitative that Ismaele and Fenena fell in love while Ismaele was imprisoned in Babylon, and that Fenena has helped him escape to Israel. They are interrupted by Abigaille, who has stolen into the temple at the head of a band of disguised Assyrian warriors. She had also fallen in love with Ismaele during his captivity and now taunts him with her victory. The accompanied recitative that introduces Abigaille immediately fixes her unusual vocal character, which requires power in her lower register, agility above the staff and a forceful dramatic presence throughout. The ensuing terzetto, 'Io t'amava', is a moment of lyrical relaxation graced with much vocal ornamentation, somewhat out of character with the rest of the score.

The finale of Part One begins with a pseudo-fugal chorus, 'Lo vedeste?', as the Israelites panic in defeat. Nabucco arrives on horseback to the triumphant strains of a banda march, but Zaccaria threatens to kill Fenena if Nabucco profanes the temple. This tableau precipitates the central, static moment of the finale, 'Tremin gl'insani', which is led off by Nabucco and which characterized by turn the conflicting attitudes of the principals. When the stage action resumes Ismaele, fearful for Fenena, disarms Zaccaria. Nabucco is now free to act and, in a furious stretta, orders the destruction of the temple.

Part 2: 'The Impious One'

Act 2 Scene i *The Royal Apartments in Babylon*

While Nabucco is away Fenena has been appointed regent. The act opens with a full-scale double aria for Abigaille, who, it turns out, is the daughter of a slave, not the king. After an intense recitative her thoughts turn to Ismaele in the Andante 'Anch'io dischiuso un giorno'. The aria is highly ornamental, with each two-bar phrase rounded by a vocal flourish; but the ornaments, typically for Verdi, are strictly contained, giving their proliferation at the climax a compelling energy. The High Priest of Baal arrives with news that Fenena has freed the Israelites; urged on by a warlike chorus, Abigaille decides to assume power herself. Her cabaletta, 'Salgo gia del trono aurato', returns to the forceful tone of the recitative and, although in a far more dynamic context, again succeeds in wedding ornamental gestures to a rigorously controlled structure.

Act 2 Scene ii *A room in the palace, giving on to other rooms*

Zaccaria's recitativo and preghiera, 'Vieni o Levita', is an oasis of calm in this generally hectic opera, its accompaniment of six solo cellos deployed with a great variety of texture. As Zaccaria leaves by one door, Ismaele arrives by another, only to be shunned by the Levites in the chorus 'Il maledetto'. Then follows another grand finale, similar in its opening sections to that of the first part. Abigaille is declared queen and is about to crown herself when Nabucco, whose death has been falsely reported, reappears to snatch the crown for himself. This precipitates the centerpiece of the finale, 'S'appressan gl'istanti', a quasi-canonic movement that gains its effect not from individual characterization (each of the principals sings the same melody) but from an inexorable increase in textural complexity and sonic power. Nabucco then faces the crowd and declares himself not only their king but their God. A thunderbolt strikes him down for this blasphemy and the crowd murmurs in shocked response. Italian operatic convention would now suggest a fast concluding movement, but instead Solera and Verdi decided on a mad scene for Nabucco during which his discourse distractedly moves between fast and slow tempos before he faints. A triumphant cry from Abigaille brings down the curtain.

Part Three: 'The Prophecy'

Act 3 Scene i *The hanging gardens of Babylon*

The routinely cheerful opening chorus, complete with stage-band interpolations borrowed from Part 1 ('E l'Assiria una regina'), is in its orchestration perhaps an early Verdian effort at depicting local colour. It leads to one of the opera's best numbers: the

Abigaille-Nabucco duet, in which Abigaille dupes her father into signing Fenena's death sentence. After an opening recitative, the duet unfolds in the traditional four-movement pattern. A fast-paced dialogue movement ('Donna, chi sei?'), in which repeated orchestral motifs supply the continuity, leads to a movement of lyrical repose in which the characters develop their opposing attitudes in greater detail (Oh di qual'onta aggravasi). The third movement reimposes the outside world as offstage trumpets announce the death sentence; and then in the final cabaletta ('Deh perdona') Nabucco and Abigaille restate their fixed positions: he begging her to show mercy, she inflexibly maintaining her dominance.

Act 3 Scene ii *The banks of the Euphrates*

The closing scene of Part 3 is entitled 'Coro e Profezia'. The Hebrews' sighs for their lost homeland are violently countered by Zaccaria, who presents a vision of the future in which Babylon will be reduced to ruins. The Hebrews' choral lament ('Va pensiero') is the most famous piece in *Nabucco*, perhaps in all Verdi. It is deliberately simple, almost incantatory in its rhythmic tread, unvaried phrase pattern and primarily unison texture; and by these means it creates that powerful sense of nostalgia which, later in the century, gave the chorus its status as a symbol of Italian national aspirations. In the context of the drama, however, the chorus's attitude is cast aside by Zaccaria, whose two-part minor-major prophecy ('Del futuro nel buio') takes up rhythmic and melodic strands from 'Va pensiero' and places them in a fresh dynamic context.

Part 4: 'The Broken Idol'

Act 4 Scene i *The royal apartments (as in Act 2 Scene i)*

The scene opens with Nabucco alone on stage, an orchestral prelude representing the king's distraction through scattered recollections of past themes. He hears a funeral march, sees Fenena on her way to execution, but is powerless to help her. As a last resort, he offers a prayer to the God of Israel; sanity returns and he marshals a band of followers to save his daughter. The scene is structured as a double aria for Nabucco, with his prayer ('Dio di Giuda') as the first part. The ensuing cabaletta ('Cadran, cadranno I perfidi') is highly unusual in beginning with a choral statement of a subsidiary theme.

Act 4 Scene ii *The hanging gardens*

To an extended version of the funeral march heard fleetingly in the previous number, Fenena and the Israelites are led towards their deaths. Fenena offers a brief but touching prayer ('Oh dischusio e il firmamento'), and then, just in time, Nabucco rushes on to save her. He announces his conversion and is restored as king; Abigaille (we learn) has taken poison. All now join in a triumphant hymn to their new God ('Immenso Jeovha'), a grandiose unaccompanied chorus with which, in most 19th-century performances, the opera came to a close. In the score, however, there is a far more restrained ending: the dying Abigaille enters to ask forgiveness, singing a fragmented melody ('Su men … morente') to the accompaniment of solo cello and english horn. (Sadie, Verdi 43-47)

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